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# Heritage learner to professional interpreter: who are deaf-parented interpreters and how do they achieve professional status?

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Heritage learner to professional interpreter:  
Who are deaf-parented interpreters and how do they achieve professional status?

By  
Amy Clara Williamson  
A thesis submitted to  
Western Oregon University

In partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of:

Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies

9 June 2015

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Western Oregon  
UNIVERSITY

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**WE, THE UNDERSIGNED MEMBERS OF THE GRADUATE FACULTY OF  
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY HAVE EXAMINED THE ENCLOSED**

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- ☒ Thesis
- ☐ Field Study
- ☐ Professional Project

Titled:

From heritage learner to professional interpreter;

Who are deaf-parented interpreters and how do they achieve professional status?

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*and hereby certify that in our opinion it is worthy of acceptance as partial fulfillment  
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“Home is a child's first and most important classroom.”

– Hillary Rodham Clinton, *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us*

“I believe every woman should own at least one pair of red shoes.”

– Terry Tempest Williams, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASL .....	American Sign Language
ATA .....	Applied Thematic Analysis
Coda/coda .....	Children (or Child) of Deaf Adult(s)
CODA .....	Children of Deaf Adults, International (organization)
CCIE .....	Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education
CLB .....	Child Language Broker
DoD .....	Deaf of Deaf (deaf individuals who have at least one deaf parent)
IDP .....	Interpreters with Deaf Parent(s)
IEP .....	Interpreter Education Program
ITP .....	Interpreter Training Program
NCIEC .....	National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers
RID .....	Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf

## ABSTRACT

### **Heritage learner to professional interpreter: Who are deaf-parented interpreters and how do they achieve professional status?**

**By**

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Master of Arts in Interpreting Studies  
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May 28, 2015**

Individuals who have one or more deaf parent can be considered heritage learners of a signed language (Compton, 2014; Valdes, 2005). These individuals have had language brokering experiences (Napier, in press) before entering a formal program or attending any training to become an interpreter. Despite the experiences and skills they bring to the classroom and the profession of ASL/ English interpreting, deaf-parented interpreters anecdotally say that educational opportunities do not account for their specific needs and skill-set. The relationship between demographic characteristics of ASL/English interpreters who have one or more deaf parent, including their linguistic environments during formative years, routes of induction into the interpretation profession, and their professional status as an interpreter is examined in this mixed-methods exploratory study. This study of 751 deaf-parented interpreters' survey responses finds that they are achieving national credentials and education and training as an interpreter through some coursework, formal and informal mentorships, and workshops. Degree and certification requirements along with state licensure before working as an interpreter may serve as a

barrier to deaf-parented interpreters who, for the most part, have been entering the field through informal induction practices within the deaf community. The results of this research can benefit the field of signed/spoken language interpreting by influencing curriculum design and teaching approaches so that the unique demographic of deaf-parented interpreters are recruited to and retained within the profession.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background**

The need for ASL/English interpreters in every cradle-to-grave event for deaf people has increased since the passage and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990. The roots of the ASL/English interpreting profession are grounded in the deaf community. The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) was founded by deaf individuals and individuals with deaf family members, alongside other bilingual professionals who served the deaf community in religious, educational, and governmental institutions (Ball, 2013). As the professionalization of the field has grown, the education and induction practices of ASL/English interpreters has moved further and further away from the roots of the deaf community (Cokely, 2005).

Bilingual individuals have always functioned as interpreters or linguistic and cultural brokers between the signing and non-signing majority communities. Deaf individuals themselves have also served this function (Adam, Carty, & Stone, 2011; Forestal, 2011). Deaf-parented children also often serve this function within their deaf families (Napier, in press). To meet the growing mandated need for ASL/English interpreters, interpreter education programs have been established and continue to operate

throughout the country to ensure there is a ready supply of trained interpreters. Prior to the establishment of these programs, interpreters evolved into interpreting through networks and informal induction practices where the deaf community functioned as gatekeepers by ushering along hearing family members and signers that showed promise (Hunt & Nicodemus, 2014). As the industry grew, a need for established educational standards emerged. Fewer and fewer interpreters are entering the profession through their connections in the deaf community (Cokely, 2005). Instead, individuals are making career choices to become interpreters and are learning signed language and about the deaf community through structured classes. This type of interpreter is the ‘schooling interpreter’ as opposed to the ‘evolved interpreter’ that enters the field organically through their connections in the language community where they may grow up interpreting for family and friends (Cokely, 2005). The change in induction practices of signed/spoken language interpreters means that “deaf individuals are being asked to give their trust to someone they have not met before, who has no prior or even current connection to their community, and who might not understand their values and culture” (McDermid, 2009, p. 111).

Today, RID requires that anyone sitting for a certification test must show that they have completed a degree or have gone through an alternate pathway assessment system to ensure qualifications equivalent to schooling (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011). This educational requirement, while good for the profession and for the people being served by interpreters because it increases the knowledge base for interpreters, may serve as a barrier for evolved interpreters to becoming an ASL/English interpreter.

Over a 24-year career as a deaf-parented interpreter, I have personally experienced and heard story after story from deaf-parented students and interpreters who say they are interested in educating themselves (Williamson, 2012). They would like opportunities to further their education and to improve their practice; however, they say that interpreter education programs and opportunities of continuing education for spoken language/signed language interpreters are, for the most part, designed for and geared toward individuals learning the signed language as a second language. These programs and courses are often designed with the assumption that the student is naïve about signed language and deaf culture and the knowledge provided is designed as if the student has never seen the information before. Students who have one or more deaf parents are native users and heritage learners of the signed language (Compton, 2014). They have been exposed to signed language, deaf culture, and have had interpreting or language/culture brokering experiences before entering a formal program or attending any training to become an interpreter/translator (Napier, in press).

### **Statement of the problem**

There is little research currently available that examines the educational and training needs of the deaf-parented student or interpreter who is a heritage user of American Sign Language; furthermore, demographic data on who deaf-parented interpreters are and what their induction practices into the profession of ASL/English interpreting have not been systematically collected. Anecdotally, deaf-parented interpreters say that educational opportunities do not account for their experience as signed language users and cultural brokers.



Standards for the industry of ASL/English interpretation require a post-secondary degree before receiving certification and an increasing number of states require licensure before being allowed to work in that state (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2014). Ensuring that there are training opportunities available to meet the needs of deaf-parented students will enable a pipeline through which native users of ASL may get adequate interpreter training.

### **Purpose of study**

In order to determine the best approach to educating deaf-parented interpreters, this exploratory study seeks to identify, describe, and examine the experiences and skills that a native user and heritage language learner of American Sign Language brings to the interpreting profession, the induction practices of deaf-parented ASL/English interpreters, and the options that may best fit interpreting students who come from deaf-parented families.

### **Theoretical basis and organization**

A clearer understanding of the deaf-parented interpreter and their onramp or induction experience to the profession of ASL/English interpreting could lead to implementation and application of improved practices within interpreter education that are specific to deaf-parented interpreters. Identifying who deaf-parented interpreters are, examining their early linguistic environments, and analyzing their onramp experiences creates a more complete understanding of this sub-set population of ASL/English interpreters and can validate the anecdotal evidence shared by deaf-parented interpreters.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Individuals who themselves hear and have at least one signing deaf parent are bimodal bilinguals and often grow up acquiring some level of fluency in both a spoken and a signed language (Pizer, 2013). Bimodal bilinguals who have at least one deaf parent are often referred to as Children of Deaf Adults (Codas) (Bull, 1998). Deaf individuals who have at least one deaf parent are sometimes called Deaf Codas but are most often referred to as Deaf of Deaf.

The fields of sociology, anthropology, linguistics, and education offer biographies, research, and ethnographic studies that define and outline the varied experiences one has when raised by one or more deaf parents, including experiences of functioning as an interpreter or language/cultural broker (Adam, Carty, & Stone, 2011; Adams, 2008; Bishop & Hicks, 2008; Napier, in press; Preston, 1994; Sidransky, 2006; Singleton & Tittle, 2000). This research study combines the work of prior studies to further examine the experiences of deaf-parented individuals within the field of ASL/English interpreting as well as their demographic make up, their onramp/induction experiences into the interpreting profession, and information about their early linguistic environment.

## **How many people are deaf-parented?**

Attempts have been made to determine the number of American Sign Language (ASL) users through annual surveys from Gallaudet University's Gallaudet Research Institute and the 1972 National Association of the Deaf National Census of the Deaf Population. From these surveys, along with estimates made by Mitchell (2005), there are approximately 360,000 to 517,000 deaf and hard of hearing individuals who sign at home. According to Mitchell and Karchmer (2004), more than 95% of deaf children are born to hearing parents. Compton (2014) estimates the number of Coda signers in America to be 131,000 to 188,500. This figure is based on an estimation that 80% of children born to deaf parents are hearing (Bishop & Hicks, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2006).

Deaf-parented interpreters, individuals who are either deaf or hearing, and have at least one deaf parent, are an overlooked demographic category within signed language interpreting research. The largest certifying body of signed language interpreters in the United States, the RID, does not collect this piece of demographic data from their membership of 16,004 (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2014). There is no way to estimate the number of deaf-parented members of RID.

The National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC) conducted a needs assessment survey of practitioners of interpreting during the fall of 2014 that asked respondents to identify if they were deaf-parented. Of the 1,878 total respondents, 208 (11%) identified as having at least one deaf parent (NCIEC, 2014). In a survey conducted among 335 British Sign Language/English interpreters, Mapson (2014) found that 13% of the respondents identified themselves as Coda. These results should be examined

cautiously since the sample size used to extrapolate the percentage of deaf-parented interpreters in each of these studies is small. The number of deaf-parented interpreters is impossible to determine when organizations take a binary (e.g. either deaf or hearing) approach to gathering demographic data of signed language/spoken language interpreters. Using the demographic categories of deaf, hearing, and deaf-parented creates a fuller understanding of signed language/spoken language interpreters.

### **Native and heritage language users of signed language**

Within the community of signed language users, few people are native users because they are born to non-signing hearing parents and, as such, the majority of native signers are hearing children of deaf parents rather than deaf individuals themselves (Compton, 2014).

Heritage users of a language are individuals who grow up learning a minority language from their parents and do not have any formal education in that language (Compton, 2014). He (2010) quotes Jason, a Chinese heritage language user, to illustrate the relationship a heritage language user may have with their home language.

My home language is Chinese. My parents are from China. They praised me, scolded me, all in Chinese... My Chinese is really bad. I can't read and I can only write my name. But when I think of Chinese, I think of my mom, dad, and home.

It is the language of my home, and my heart. (He, 2010, p. 66)

While the definition of heritage language and heritage learners is still not exact in the literature, each definition fits the experience of hearing children of signing deaf parents. According to He (2010), "the term heritage language has been used synonymously with

community language, native language, and mother tongue to refer to a language other than English used by immigrants and their children” (p. 66). Valdés (2001) defines a heritage language learner as “a language student who is raised in a home where a non-English target language is spoken and who speaks or at least understands the language and is to some degree bilingual in it and in English” (p. 38). Van Deusen-Scholl (2003) expands the definition of heritage language learner to “a heterogeneous group ranging from fluent native speakers to non-speakers who may be generations removed, but who may feel culturally connected to a language” (p. 221). By these definitions, Codas can be considered heritage users of their parent’s signed language.

### **Deaf-parented interpreters are different than other interpreters**

Being native heritage users of signed language uniquely situates deaf-parented individuals within the deaf community (Singleton & Tittle, 2000). Adams (2008) confirms the Coda’s status as a separate and autonomous group, not deaf and not hearing, with their own identity, in her mixed-methods study. The study involved semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 50 participants of various ages. Of the total participants, 26 were Codas and 24 were not (12 hearing and 12 deaf). The elicited autobiographical narratives were categorized into themes and sub-themes and then categorized according to age/life event. The main themes that emerged were labeled as “middleman,” “misfit,” “foreigner,” and “glass ceiling.” The “misfit” theme was the most common for the Codas across the lifespan. The hearing deaf-parented individual’s audiological status becomes conflated with their identity and they are left feeling as if they are misfits in both the hearing and deaf communities because they do not feel like either. Preston (1994)

explores the identity and role of hearing deaf-parented individuals through extensive interviews with 150 American Coda. Both Adams (a non-Coda) and Preston (a Coda) found that deaf-parented individuals often feel the tension of straddling both the deaf and hearing communities where language is the crux of that intersection.

### **Deaf-parented individuals as circumstantial bilinguals**

Unlike elective bilinguals who choose to learn another language, Codas are characterized as circumstantial bilinguals as a result of their life circumstance. They are given no choice but to be bilingual (Napier, in press).

Recently, there has been a surge in the amount of linguistic research conducted on Codas on topics ranging from language acquisition, code blending, bilingualism, to language ideology within families (Bishop & Hicks, 2005; Emmorey et al, 2008; Mather & Andrews, 2008; Pizer, 2007; Pizer, Walters, & Meier, 2012; Pyers & Emmorey, 2008; Schiff-Myers, 1988; Singleton & Tittle, 2000; van den Bogaerde & Andrews, 2008; Wilhelm, 2008). Each of these studies clarifies and informs our understanding of present-day bimodal bilinguals who come from deaf families and have acquired a signed language as a first language.

Some researchers have looked at how families with deaf and hearing family members negotiate communication within the family and whether the results lead to asymmetrical language development in the signed or spoken language. Bilingual families navigate communication among family members depending on their beliefs and judgments about language use within the home (Pizer, Walters, & Meier, 2012). For deaf families, the bimodal nature of spoken/signed language use can also allow for code

blending, the use of 2 languages at once, which is not possible among unimodal bilinguals. Whether an individual develops enough fluency in both a signed and spoken language to either choose or happen into a career as a signed language/spoken language interpreter merits further examination.

Pizer (2013), in observational case studies of three families and interviews with 13 deaf-parented adults, found that despite varied language use patterns and language fluencies within the families, the common factor was a “value on unimpeded communication between family members rather than on specific languages, on the idea of fluent bilingualism, or on approval from the Deaf or Hearing communities” (p. 217). Kanto, Huttunen, and Laakso (2013) conducted a longitudinal study in Finland of hearing children between the ages of 12 and 30 months with at least one deaf parent who was a native user of Finnish Sign Language. Their study examined data from parental interviews, questionnaires, and video recorded interactions. The goal of this study was to correlate variation in early linguistic environment to bilingual development or language dominance over time. The study found that, as opposed to the minority signed language, development of the dominant spoken language was less sensitive to variations based on the amount of exposure, number and variety of speakers. Kanto, Huttunen, and Laakso (2013) found that strong exposure to signed language lead to stronger signed language development and, in turn, a better ability to use both languages.

### **What is a Child Language Broker?**

In their theoretical/review article, Singleton and Tittle (2000) lay out descriptions of the Deaf community, its language and culture, communication patterns, and the

parenting issues that arise in deaf-parented families. They also describe the role a hearing child of deaf parents may play and how that experience affects their functioning in a non-deaf world. One such function, also found among deaf of deaf individuals (Adam, Carty, & Stone, 2011), is that of child language broker (CLB).

Child language broker is the term used to describe instances where a child who is more fluent in the majority language and culture brokers communication and cultural nuances between the child's parents who use a minority language and the community that uses the majority spoken language. Child language brokering is often seen in immigrant families where parents have varying degrees of competency in the majority language of their new home. Children in these families acquire the majority language more quickly than their immigrant parents when immersed in educational settings. This greater fluency leads to instances of language and cultural brokering to bridge the communication between their parents and the majority language using community.

Napier (in press) found in her applied research project replicating existing CLB research with deaf-parented individuals who are both deaf and hearing, that out of 210 respondents, 99% reported brokering for their parents either in the past or currently. In Napier's study, the parents used a signed language that was not the language of the majority community.

### **How does an American Sign Language/English interpreter get educated?**

The Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education's (CCIE) *Accreditation Standards* were developed to give stakeholders within the American Sign Language/English interpreting profession a common understanding of knowledge and



competencies that students of interpreting needed to acquire (Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education, 2010). Carter (2015) conducted a survey of interpreter-training programs' entry requirements and found there to be no standardized process for establishing baseline skills and knowledge for acceptance into these programs. Only 14 programs are accredited by CCIE (Commission on Collegiate Interpreter Education, 2015) and follow any set of standardized guidelines in interpreter education. The lack of standardized education programs can result in wildly varying competencies among graduates. Without standardized requirements for language competency in the working languages of the interpreting students prior to admission into interpreter education, instructors are tasked with language instruction instead of focusing on interpreting theory and practice (Roy, 2000; Shaw, Grbic, & Franklin, 2004). Interpreter education programs, in general, are not designed to train students who possess ASL fluency (Roy, 2000).

Further examination of the research of Shaw and Hughes (2006), Godfrey (2011), and Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005), each of whom delved into spoken language/signed language interpreter training and the competencies on which it should focus, helps to understand the current induction practices of ASL/English interpreters. Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005) undertook the *Entry to Practice Competency Project* with the aim of solving the readiness to credential gap<sup>1</sup> faced by newly trained interpreters. In an effort to bridge theory, research, and current practice this action research project involved interviewing stakeholders (deaf individuals, employers,

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<sup>1</sup> This phrase is used to define the time it takes a recent graduate of an interpreter education program to achieve a credential of state licensure or national certification as a signed language/spoken language interpreter (Godfrey, 2010).

educators, practitioners, students, and policy makers) in order to create a 360-degree view of the interpreting profession through 7 focus groups, 65 interviews, and 51 individuals surveyed. The results of Witter-Merithew and Johnson's (2005) comprehensive study put forth 5 foundational curricular domains for interpreter education: theory and knowledge, human relations, language skills, interpreting skills, and professionalism along with 34 competencies. For this literature review and its application to deaf-parented interpreters, the perspectives of several of the stakeholder groups as found by Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2005) are noteworthy:

1. The deaf community named both interpreter attitude and linguistic competence as characteristics of import when asked about their preferences in working with an interpreter.
2. Students noted that the "unspoken curriculum" of out-of-class learning and community interaction was a barrier to mastering competencies within the time allotted in an interpreter-training program.
3. Interpreter educators ask for clearer entry requirements and pre-requisite language learning.
4. Practitioners express the need for a systematic process of interpreter induction.

Witter-Merithew and Johnson's 2005 findings are echoed in other spoken language/signed language training program research. In Godfrey's (2011) sequential mixed-method study focusing on the readiness to credential gap and the characteristics of successful interpreter education programs, she found that more out-of-classroom learning, practicums, and connections with the deaf community need to take place in

order to ensure a shorter time frame between graduation and the graduate achieving a credential. Godfrey (2011) first conducted an analysis of survey data collected in the 2009 NCIEC Interpreter Education Program (IEP) Needs Assessment. Based on that analysis, Godfrey then conducted interviews with five institutions that house IEPs and also surveyed 126 IEPs. Her findings demonstrated that the programs that have more out-of-classroom learning opportunities, connections with the deaf community, and stringent language entrance requirements are more likely to have graduates successfully achieve credentials at or soon after graduation.

Outcomes of an interpreter education program should be the same regardless of the skills brought into the program; however, it cannot be overlooked that deaf-parented students enter such programs with a different skillset and experience than non-deaf parented students. They are native users of the signed language, heritage language learners of the signed language, and have experience as child language brokers (Adam et al, 2011; Ashton, Cagle, Kurz, Newell, Peterson, & Zinza, 2013; Compton, 2014; & Napier, in press).

### **Characteristics of heritage learners of ASL**

“Heritage language speakers’ background knowledge and relationship with a community of speakers make their educational needs different from those of foreign language learners in terms of program goals, materials, and curriculum” (Kelleher, Haynes, & Moore, 2010, pp. 3). Many language teachers have been trained to teach the language as a foreign language but when there are heritage language learners in the class, teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching students with variable skills. Some

heritage language students are fully fluent, some have receptively understood the language but have limited productive abilities, and others are fluent in a more casual or colloquial register of the language (Ashton et al, 2013; Valdés, 2001). The family members of the heritage language student may use a language variety that is different than the standard that is taught in school programs causing even more complexity for the language teacher.

Natural language acquisition happens more fully and easily the more a user is immersed in that language. Kagan (2005) identifies the three language environments of community, family, and formal education as instrumental places of immersion. If language immersion are not in place in each of these 3 environments then language acquisition will suffer (Kagan, 2005). Studies have shown that language exposure in only one of the environments and not the others result in the student acquiring very little language (Edelsky & Hudelson, 1980; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Qin, 2005). Additionally, foreign language students do not often have knowledge of the cultural and linguistic foundation that can be difficult to acquire without a full immersion experience in that language and culture. This lack of knowledge means that foreign language classes have to incorporate cultural and linguistic aspects of the language into the structure of the class (Kelleher, Haynes, & Moore, 2010).

Heritage language learners and foreign language learners both take language classes with the goal of becoming fluent users of the language who can successfully interact in the language in a variety of contexts; however, heritage language users may have the additional personal goal of wanting to understand the language and culture of their family (Ashton et al, 2013; Kelleher, Haynes, & Moore, 2010). In the standards for

learning American Sign Language, Ashton et al (2013) address heritage language learning within ASL instruction by acknowledging that formal ASL instruction to deaf students is an emerging area of interest as is ASL instruction in K-12 settings for hearing children of deaf parents. The standards also acknowledge that “students without previous exposure to ASL may find the rapid pace of native ASL discourse limits their comprehension, while heritage learners may find unfamiliar topics and registers challenging” (Ashton et al, 2013, p. 15) suggesting differentiated instruction for these two groups of learners. What is seen most often in foreign language instruction is generally a one-size-fits-all approach where the curriculum is sequential and linear, the course content is fixed based on coursework rather than learner’s characteristics, the teaching materials are uniform, and the pacing is lockstep expecting everyone to gain mastery at the same time (Carreira & Kagan, 2011).

Research is showing more and more patterns of language use found to be unique to heritage language users (Polinsky & Kagan, 2007; Carreira & Kagan, 2011). Through a review of the literature and their own research, Reynolds and Palmer (2014) take the patterns found by other authors among heritage language users and outline what is known about Coda and their ASL heritage language use:

- Heritage language users often have better receptive language skills than production. A Coda’s receptive skills may be better than their production. They may understand signs but have limited signing skills themselves.
- Their phonology is typically native-like: handshapes, movements, prosody, fingerspelling, non-manuals.

- Heritage language users' lexical knowledge in the heritage language is limited. A Coda's vocabulary may be specific to home vocabulary and lacks a wide range of register (Ashton et al, 2013).
- Heritage language users have an incomplete morphology system. Codas' uses of space or complex structures like depicting verbs (classifiers) are incomplete (McCarthy, 1979).
- Heritage language users use a basic syntax. Codas may have an overreliance on Subject Verb Object word order and Wh-initial sentence types.

### **Characteristics of interpreting students**

While Godfrey (2011) focused on the characteristics of the interpreter education programs themselves, Shaw and Hughes (2006) focused on the characteristics of the students in interpreter education programs. Through a mixed-methods study of 1,236 students and 121 faculty members focusing on academic habits and skills, information processing skills, and personality characteristics, they found several correlations between students and faculty; just as importantly, they also found areas where there were differences of thought between the two groups. This review focuses on the findings that are applicable to deaf-parented interpreters.

Both students and faculty felt that within the academic habits and skills domain, independent involvement with second-language (signed language in this case) users and language competency to articulate one's thoughts are important. Additionally, within the personality characteristics domain, students need to be self-confident and faculty need to

address struggling students from the start of their interpreter education program (Shaw & Hughes, 2006).

Studies highlighted so far make no mention of deaf-parented interpreters as a subset of the student population. Shaw and Hughes (2006) do ask about the presence of deaf family members in the demographic section of the survey but do not define 'family member' within the context of the study. Of the 1,236 student responses to the survey, 6.3% answered that they had a deaf family member (Shaw & Hughes, 2006). Stuard (2008) had a similar demographic response in her qualitative study with 6% of the 69 hearing respondents reporting to be native signers. Readers could assume the respondent has a deaf family member from whom they learned to sign at a young age but Stuard does not delineate the definition of 'native' within her study design.

Stuard's (2008) study is quite broad in scope as it attempts to explore the deaf community's preferred characteristics of interpreters. She analyzes responses for similarities and dissimilarities between how deaf consumers of interpreting services perceive interpreters and how interpreters perceive themselves. Her study also looks at cultural affiliation, acceptance within the deaf community, and whether parentage influences an interpreter's qualifications. As one of her study's research questions, Stuard asks of both the hearing and deaf study participants via survey, "Does the Deaf consumer perceive that an adult child of Deaf parents would be more qualified to interpret than an adult child of hearing parents because of access to American Sign Language from birth?" (2008, p. 92). Stuard (2008) found some deaf consumers view hearing, deaf-parented interpreters as being qualified to interpret simply based on their parentage/early exposure to signed language. Respondents also stated that Cudas have idiomatic use of ASL and

are also culturally competent which is not uncommon among heritage language learners. Heritage language users may have incomplete L1 acquisition or L1 attrition over time that leads to dysfluency in their heritage language (Montrul, 2013). For Codas, the signed language is the heritage language. The Coda's use and access to the language may be limited to use within the family. Without signed language use in a wider community with various users of the signed language, language acquisition may be incomplete or attrition may occur over time if the language is not continually used.

In Stuard's survey, hearing interpreters reported perceiving deaf-parented interpreters as having intuitive practicality and cultural awareness. They also reported that Codas might have better ASL-to-English skill because of early exposure to ASL (Stuard, 2008). Stuard also found that deaf and hearing respondents say that qualifications of an interpreter should be based on skill, motivation, education, and certification, not just parentage. Hearing interpreters reported a belief that deaf-parented interpreters lack interpersonal skills, have inappropriate boundaries, and have issues related to control/helper roles and confidentiality (Stuard, 2008). McDermid (2008) had similar findings from the respondents that commented about deaf-parented/heritage language learner students in his interviews with interpreter educators.

In interviewing 34 Canadian interpreter educators, McDermid (2008) found that research participants reported the perception that deaf-parented students had a positive impact on the programs overall. Coda students "brought to class a higher level of sensitivity to deaf culture and more awareness of deaf people than their non-Coda peers. They were described as advanced students and were seen as willing to help the other students when asked for advice" (McDermid, 2008, p.118). When interviewed,



instructors also cited issues with Coda students around lack of knowledge of deaf culture, weak ASL and English language fluency, and general issues with attitude among deaf-parented students. Two of the deaf instructors in the study said, “Coda students ended up disagreeing with them a lot and had gotten into arguments over how to sign things” (McDermid, 2008, p. 119) and a hearing instructor felt that “some of the (Coda) students enrolled because they thought it would be a fast way to get some kind of job but then later found the college experience overwhelming” (McDermid, 2008, pp.119). Other issues brought up in this study were around Coda students interpreting while on a placement when they were specifically told not to, expecting to breeze through the program because they signed better than their classmates, and Coda students struggling emotionally as they grapple with understanding their Coda identity and their relationship with their deaf parents.

### **How do others perceive deaf-parented interpreters?**

In a review of the literature, there are few examples of the deaf consumer, interpreters, or interpreter educators being asked their perceptions on deaf-parented interpreters but the results are notable. These findings speak to both the value a deaf-parented interpreter brings to the profession and the need for appropriate training for deaf-parented interpreters as recognized by interpreter practitioners, interpreter educators, and deaf consumers of interpreting services.

Edwards, Temple, and Alexander (2005) focused their study on spoken language minorities in the United Kingdom and their experiences with spoken language interpreters. This study included 50 semi-structured interviews of Chinese, Kurdish,

Bangladeshi, Indian, and Polish speakers of various ages and genders. The interviews were conducted by in-group interviewers and focused on eliciting stories to determine what qualities are necessary in a good interpreter. The findings of this study have merit within the signed language interpreting community, as there are strong parallels to be made between cultural and linguistic minority groups that may be dependent on interpreters.

Within the signed language interpreting community Napier and Rohan (2007) and Napier (2011) have looked at perceptions of signed language interpreters from the lens of the deaf consumer. Through survey and focus group, Napier and Rohan (2007) conducted a study of deaf Auslan (Australian signed language) users' experience and perspective on what constitutes a good interpreter or good interpreting experience. They found that deaf consumers preferences for interpreters "focus heavily on issues relevant to professionalism, expressive signing skills, personal characteristics and message translation adequacy" (Napier & Rohan, 2007, pp. 182).

Napier (2011) conducted focus groups with stakeholders to determine their perceptions of interpreters. One of the goals of this study was to get a more rounded view of interpreters from all stakeholders, including the community members that use the majority language (the hearing person). Several studies are cited by Napier (Napier & Barker, 2004; Kurz & Langer, 2004; Forestal, 2011) as laying out issues among the deaf community with interpreters as the following:

The status of the interpreter in the community (belonging), trust between the interpreter and the minority language user client, familiarity between the interpreter and the minority language user client, the level of comfort for the

minority language user client and the interpreter, professionalism of interpreters, linguistic skills of interpreters, flexibility of interpreters, and interpreters having a 'good attitude' (Napier, 2011, pp. 63).

From the focus groups with stakeholders, Napier (2011) found that the words "understand, need, professional, language, and attitude" were the most mentioned in regards to perceptions of signed language interpreters (pp. 81).

As Stuard (2008) found, it is an accepted view that deaf-parented interpreters have an in-group advantage personally, linguistically, and culturally over other interpreters; however, hearing interpreters and the deaf community view deaf-parented interpreters to be generally unprofessional in their behavior and demeanor. Edwards, Temple, and Alexander (2005) did not include interpreters in their interviews but in their research with the users of interpreting services, they found a strong preference for in-group interpreters that are connected to them either as friends or family because there is a level of trust, emotional commitment, and loyalty that is inherent in that relationship. Professional interpreters who are not connected with the user of services by an informal network, were viewed in a negative light because they were viewed as being concerned about themselves only and did not have the characteristics that the user felt was important, such as: language proficiency in the consumer's mother tongue, empathy and understanding, and advocacy/advising based on cultural understanding (Edwards, et al, 2005). In spite of the negative view of professional interpreters, the user of services acknowledged that they usually held specialized knowledge and respected confidentiality in a way that the family member or friend did not. For the individuals included in this study, trust offsets issues of competence or privacy.

In sum, people want either a family member or friend who has professional skills and expertise, and who demonstrates some of the qualities evident in professional codes of good practice, or a professional interpreter who fulfills the obligations inherent in their role and is a proactive and familiar person. (Edwards, et al, 2005, p. 91)

In Edwards et al. (2005), a similar thread to that in Stuard's (2008) research has emerged. Adequate training needs to be provided for bilinguals who are raised within the ASL-using/deaf community.

## **Implications and Conclusions**

A review of the research shows that there is agreement that a deaf-parented upbringing is unique in exposing one to the language and culture of the deaf community. Deaf-parented individuals are a small sub-population of the deaf community; however, they account for the majority of native users of the signed language and are heritage users of the signed language. The deaf-parented individual's experience as a child language broker could lay a foundation for further training and induction to a career as a signed language interpreter. Across the literature, individuals who depend on interpreters express a strong preference for interpreters who are from within their community and have linguistic/cultural competency. Trust and attitude have proven to be the most sought-after traits of signed language/spoken language interpreters.

Armed with the requisite language, cultural background and brokering experience, a deaf-parented individual may choose a career as a signed language/English interpreter. Doing so would use their knowledge of the language and community and satisfy the deaf community's preference for interpreter characteristics. Research has also shown that signed language/English interpreter education programs in the United States have not systematically accommodated the unique learning needs of deaf-parented students who are heritage language users and learners.

This review of the literature therefore reveals gaps in knowledge of the deaf-parented interpreter's experience and needs in interpreter training. This study seeks to partially address this gap by conducting research to answer the following questions:

- Who are deaf-parented interpreters?
- What are the induction experiences of deaf-parented interpreters into the profession of signed language interpretation?
- What are the early linguistic environments of deaf-parented interpreters?

## Chapter 3

### METHOD

This study was designed to elicit both quantitative and qualitative information from people who are deaf-parented and either have now or have ever worked as an ASL/English interpreter. This study explored the question of who deaf-parented interpreters are, including a survey of their induction routes into the profession of signed language/spoken language interpreting as well as their early linguistic environments. Pöchhacker (2004) explains three methods used within interpreting studies: fieldwork, surveys, and experiments (the most common type). This exploratory study began with a survey to be followed up with focus group discussions at a later date.

#### **Design**

A large-scale mixed-methods exploratory survey of deaf-parented interpreters who identify as either deaf, hard of hearing, hearing or Coda was conducted. The survey was intended to collect demographic data on ASL/English interpreters who have one or more deaf parent, and included questions designed to capture the induction experiences of deaf-parented interpreters into the profession of signed language interpretation and gather information about the early linguistic environment of deaf-parented interpreters. The survey instrument in this study was developed based on adaptations of the needs assessment survey conducted by the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC, 2010), the survey of demographic and self-identification information

for heritage learners of Mexican descent (Gignoux, 2009), the National Heritage Language Survey (Carreira & Kagan, 2011), and the survey conducted by Napier (in press) in her study of child language brokering (CLB). Each of these instruments served as baselines for population comparisons with ASL/English interpreters, heritage language users, and child language brokers who may or may not have one or more deaf parent.

### **Participants**

During the month of August 2014, individuals who were at least 18 years of age, had one or more deaf parent, used signed language in the home while growing up, currently work or have ever worked as an ASL/English interpreter, and identified as deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, or Coda were asked to participate in the survey.

### **Survey Instrument**

The survey instrument was developed using Google Forms, an online software program (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey). A total of 121 required questions were presented in English. They were a mix of Likert scaled statements, multiple choice items, attitudinal rating scales, and open-ended questions. The survey questions were organized into eleven sections. The survey was designed to take the respondent through the appropriate series of questions based on responses to prior questions. For example, if a respondent attended a formal interpreter education program they were presented with questions about that experience. If they did not, then they were presented with a series of questions about how they acquired training as an interpreter.

Section 1 of the survey provided a background, an introduction, and an explanation of the implied consent of continuing to complete the survey and participation to the project. This section was provided in English and ASL<sup>2</sup>.

Section 2 of the survey (questions 1-2), served to filter out ineligible respondents by confirming status as an ASL/English interpreter now or in the past and whether the respondents have one or more deaf parents. These qualifying questions were required within the survey design. If a respondent answered no to either question, they were routed out of the survey.

Section 3 of the survey (questions 3-23) was designed to collect demographic information, including gender, age, education, race/ethnic background, siblings, audiological status, deaf family members, language use, language aptitude, and language attitudes. This section also elicited information on whether the participant grew up within 60 miles of a residential school for the deaf and/or a large deaf community or if they currently live within 60 miles of their deaf parent. The information gathered in this section serves to better characterize the general characteristics of deaf-parented interpreters and identify any patterns that may be found among the surveyed population of deaf-parented interpreters.

Section 4 of the survey (questions 24-43) collected data about respondents' parents. The questions in this section define the parent relationship as well as elicit information about the parent's identity, age of sign acquisition, educational background, and language use at home. The results of the questions in this section can create a

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<sup>2</sup> The ASL version of this video can be viewed here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dTLQImr2iM>



composite of characteristics and backgrounds of parents of deaf-parented interpreters. The gathering of this information can lead to the identification of patterns that may contribute to the deaf-parented interpreter's cultural and linguistic identity formation.

Section 5 of the survey (questions 44-57) was designed to examine the early linguistic environment of respondents by asking questions about language use at home and attitudes towards language use. This section gathers that information in order to identify any relationships between one's early linguistic environment and the respondent's work as a signed language interpreter.

Section 6 (questions 58-94) collected information on the respondents' onramp experiences to the field of ASL/English interpreting. The questions in this section ask where and how an interpreter with deaf parents becomes an interpreter and includes some attitudinal questions about that process.

Section 7 (questions 95-96) collected information on how long the respondent had been working as an interpreter and at what age they began.

Section 8 (questions 97-100) collected interpreting credentials data; including asking why one does not currently hold a credential if they do not.

Section 9 (questions 101-111) focused on the respondents' work environments, such as if they have a staff position and, if so, in what type of setting.

Section 10 (questions 112-120) asked participants to reflect on deaf-parented interpreter training by asking what topics respondents would like to see more of in training or if deaf-parented interpreters should go through a different type of interpreter training than students without a deaf parent.

The final section, Section 11 (question 121), elicited participants for further follow-up study by asking for their email address to be contacted at a later date for a focus group. The email addresses shared were kept confidential and separate from the survey responses.

The questionnaire was drafted and then piloted among deaf-parented ASL/English interpreters of various ages, genders, geographical locations, interpreting credentials and onramp experiences to ensure readability, comprehension, flow, and appropriateness of each survey item. Piloting was conducted twice with two different groups of ten individuals. Some minor changes occurred after each pilot and before it was shared with the public.

## **Procedure**

Using network and snowball sampling (Hale & Napier, 2013), the survey questionnaire was administered on-line. A link to the Google Form was sent directly to the researcher's network of interpreters via email. The link was also posted and shared among Facebook and Google groups that are specific to individuals who are deaf-parented, such as Children of Deaf Adults, International (CODA) and the RID's Interpreters with Deaf Parents (IDP) member section. Further sampling was assisted by the use of large-scale databases of the RID membership and the email distribution network coordinated by the NCIEC. RID has a database of 16,004 members and NCIEC's database is about 1,300. The open rate for the emails that went out from NCIEC was 42% the first time it was sent out and 41% the second time it was emailed (M. Eames, personal communication, September 4, 2014).

The online nature of the survey ensured that participants could choose to participate wherever and whenever was convenient. Participants were told that the estimated time to complete the survey was 25 minutes and it remained open and available to anyone following the link for the entire month of August 2014.

## **Sample**

A total of 835 responses were received; however, only 751 met both the inclusion criteria of having one or more deaf parent and either currently working as or had worked in the past as an ASL/English interpreter. Thirty-seven did not work now nor had ever worked as an ASL/English interpreter and the remaining 47 ineligible respondents did not have one or more deaf parent. If these two questions were asked in the reverse order, the survey would have been able to capture how many of the respondents were deaf parented but not interpreters. It could be assumed that the 37 respondents that did not now nor had ever worked as an interpreter were deaf-parented but the order of the questions prevents that type of analysis.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

Applied thematic analysis (ATA), a type of inductive analysis of qualitative data that can involve multiple analytic techniques (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012), is the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research. Through the use of ATA, word searches and key-word-in-context techniques were used as a foundation for identifying and describing themes among the open text box responses. These themes held both implicit and explicit ideas that arose from the data itself. The benefit of ATA in this

exploratory study is that it “draws from a broad range of several theoretical and methodological perspectives, but in the end, its primary concern is with presenting stories and experiences voiced by study participants as accurately and comprehensively as possible” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 15-16).

Descriptive statistics was applied to the quantitative data collected from the completed questionnaires. The use of pivot tables within Excel spreadsheets in order to correlate and cross-tabulate data for pattern identification enabled the creation of tables and figures; these allowed better visualization of patterns in the data. The data represented in tables and figures led to a series of hypothetical questions for data probing that was created, revised, and added to as cross-tabulation and analysis of data revealed additional findings.

### **Methodological limitations**

The length of the survey instrument, the use of written English as the language of the survey, and the method of survey dissemination may have limited the scope of this study. The survey was estimated to take 25 minutes, but in practice, it took many respondents as long as 45 minutes to complete. The target population for the survey is bilingual individuals whose native languages are ASL and English. The survey was conducted in English and this may have been a barrier for respondents that preferred participation in a survey that was conducted in ASL.

The survey relies on self-reporting and, in this case, there is no way to ensure accuracy or truthfulness in regards to responses especially as it relates to language competence in ASL and English.

Finally, the survey was disseminated primarily through social media channels. Potential respondents who were not tied into their email or social media during the month of August 2014 may have not had the opportunity to participate in this study. The survey was disseminated through snowball sampling so there is no way to know how many people it actually reached.

### **Caution to application**

As the deaf community is changing, the incoming student/interpreter population is also as varied as their parents are. This survey serves as a snapshot of one point in time. The researcher used social networks available to her: a white, female, hearing, middle-aged, and mid-career interpreter with deaf parents. This may have limited the reach of the survey. The limited reach may mean the survey did not reach younger, newer interpreters or older, more seasoned interpreters. It also may mean that neither deaf-parented interpreters who are deaf nor interpreters of color were as represented as they could be.

### **Methodological strengths**

The response rate to the survey is impossible to determine; however, the initial goal of 250 respondents was far exceeded. This is the largest study conducted of deaf-parented interpreters thus far. While caution is advised in its application, the responses are generally applicable. The age demographic is also evenly distributed.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS

#### Respondent characteristics

A total of 751 eligible responses were received from 609 female (81.09%), 140 male (19.64%) and two trans (0.27%) individuals. When comparing these numbers to RID membership and NCIEC needs assessment survey respondents in Table 1, females are the predominant gender among signed/spoken language interpreters. Most notably within the gender data, males are represented at a higher percentage (5-9%) in the deaf-parented interpreter demographic when compared to interpreters with hearing parents or all interpreters regardless of parents' auditory status.

	<b>Williamson survey (n=751)</b>	<b>NCIEC: IDP only (n=208 )</b>	<b>NCIEC: non-IDP (n=1,670 )</b>	<b>RID (All members) (n=16,004 )</b>
<b>Male</b>	19.64%	17%	10%	12.6%
<b>Female</b>	81.09%	83%	89%	87.3%
<b>Trans</b>	.27%	0%	1%	Not asked

Table 1. Gender of respondents across three data sets

Respondents varied in ages as seen in Figure 1. A large majority (88.1%) of the respondents were between the ages of 26 and 65. This age breakdown was not surprising, as younger deaf-parented individuals may not yet be interpreting professionally and older deaf-parented individuals may be out of the profession. Younger (18-25) and older (66+)

deaf-parented interpreters also may have not been connected to the researcher through social media channels, which was a primary distribution mode.

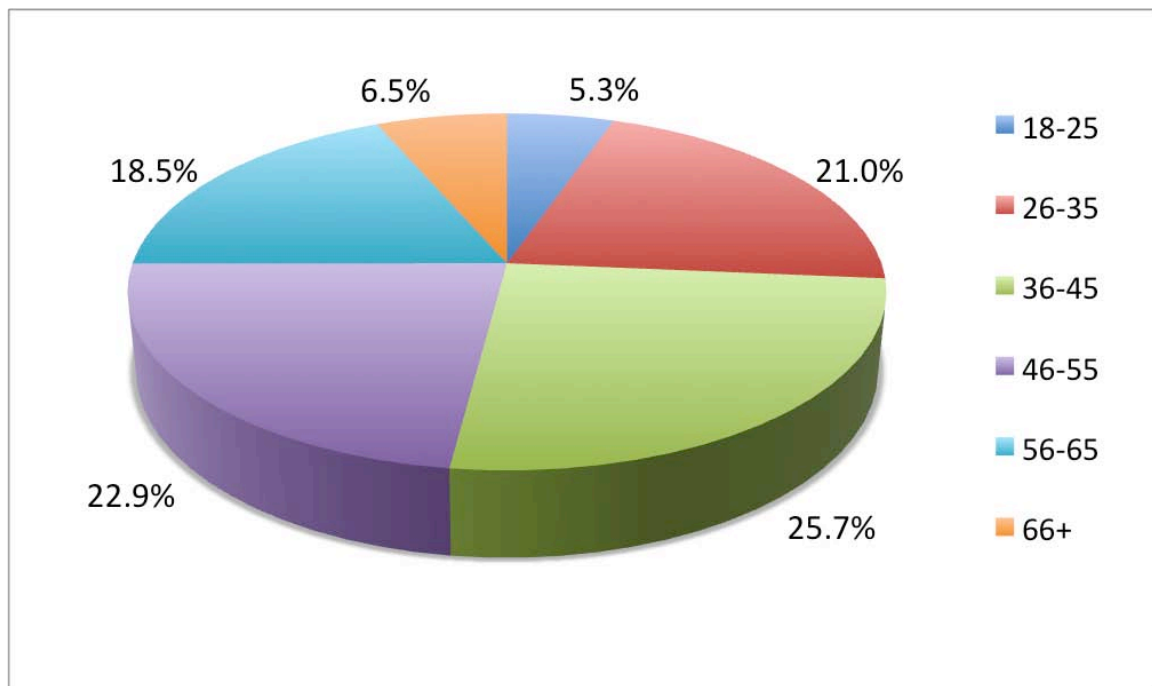


Figure 1. Age groups of respondents

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one category when asked about racial and ethnic backgrounds. A large majority (87.1%) of respondents indicated that they identify with a white race/ethnic background (Figure 2). The lack of representation from interpreters of color is of concern in this finding. Survey findings were compared with the RID membership and the NCIEC needs assessment survey and the lack of representation among interpreters of color is an issue across the board as seen in Table 2.

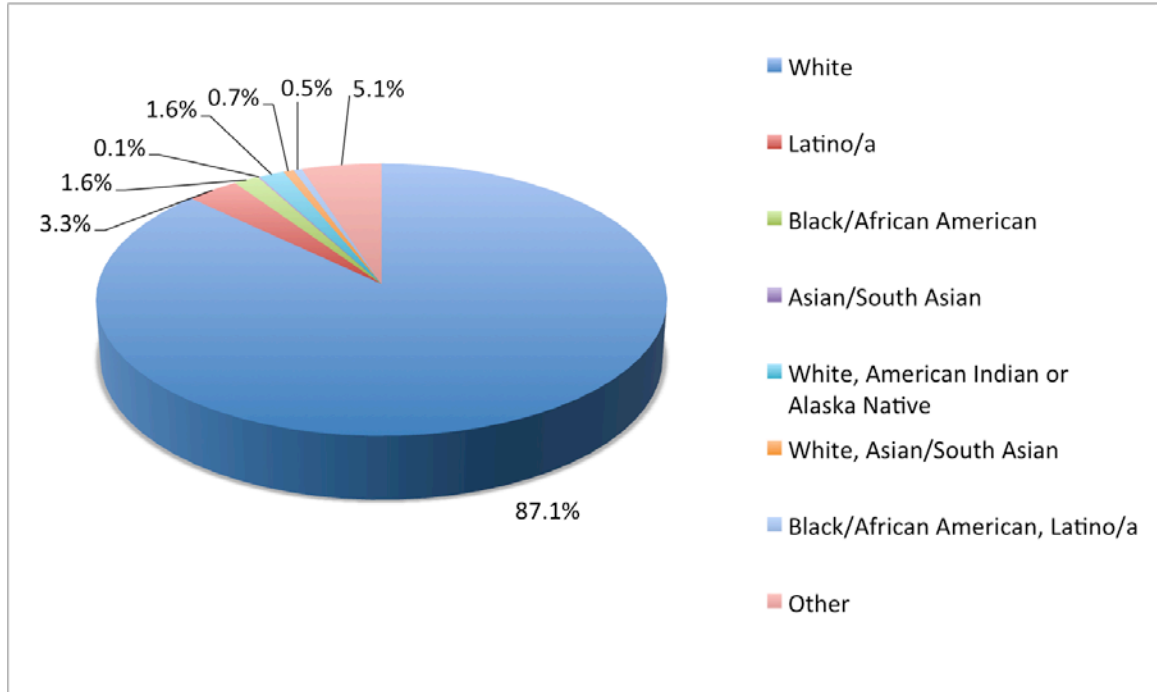


Figure 2. Racial/ethnic background of respondents

	Williamson survey (n=751)	NCIEC: IDP only (n=208 )	NCIEC: non-IDP (n=1,670 )	RID (all members) (n=16,004)
<b>White</b>	87.1%	83%	84%	87.7%
<b>Latino/a</b>	3.3%	3%	3%	4%
<b>Black/AA</b>	1.6%	1%	3%	4.7%
<b>Asian</b>	0.1%	0%	1%	1.8%
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	0%	3%	1%	.86%
<b>Mixed race</b>	2.8%	7%	3%	Unknown
<b>Other/prefer not answer</b>	5.1%	3%	5%	.84%

Table 2. Racial/ethnic background of respondents across three data sets

To collect data to either support or refute the oft-heard anecdotal comment that there are a large proportion of interpreters that identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or



queer (LGBTQ), respondents were asked if they identify as LGBTQ. Of the 751 respondents, 86.82% (652) identified no, 8.26% (62) identified yes, and 4.93% (37) preferred not to answer.

While 90.7% of respondents identified their audiological status as hearing, the remaining 9.3% indicated being deaf, hard of hearing, or late-deafened (Figure 3). An analysis of respondents' audiological status in comparison to similar data sets is impossible because this study offered late-deafened and hard of hearing options for responses in addition to the binary deaf and hearing ones. Many other studies of interpreters and deaf-parented interpreters operate on the assumption that individuals participating in the study are either deaf or hearing; because this survey allows for additional responses, population comparisons are difficult. The resulting finding shows that, much like the deaf community, the deaf-parented population contains nuances that resist simplification.

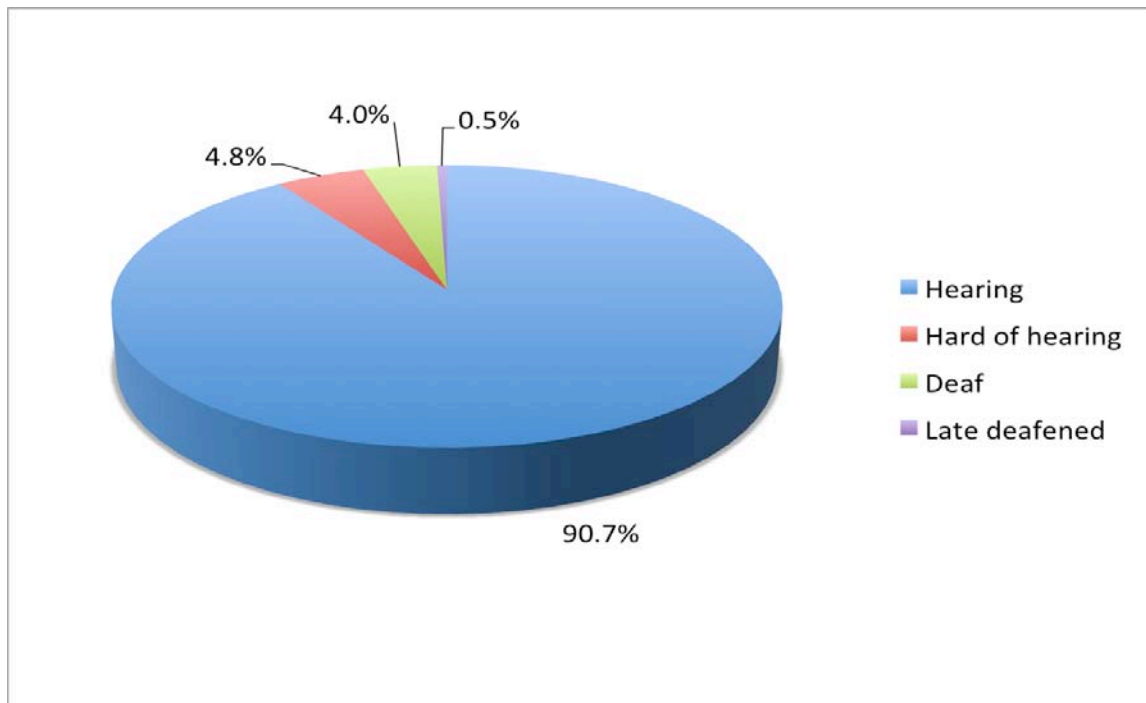


Figure 3. Respondents' audiological status

A majority of the respondents indicated having completed some level of post-secondary education (Figure 4). Only 6.92% of the respondents indicated having no college and no degree, whereas 20.11% of the respondents have advanced degrees.

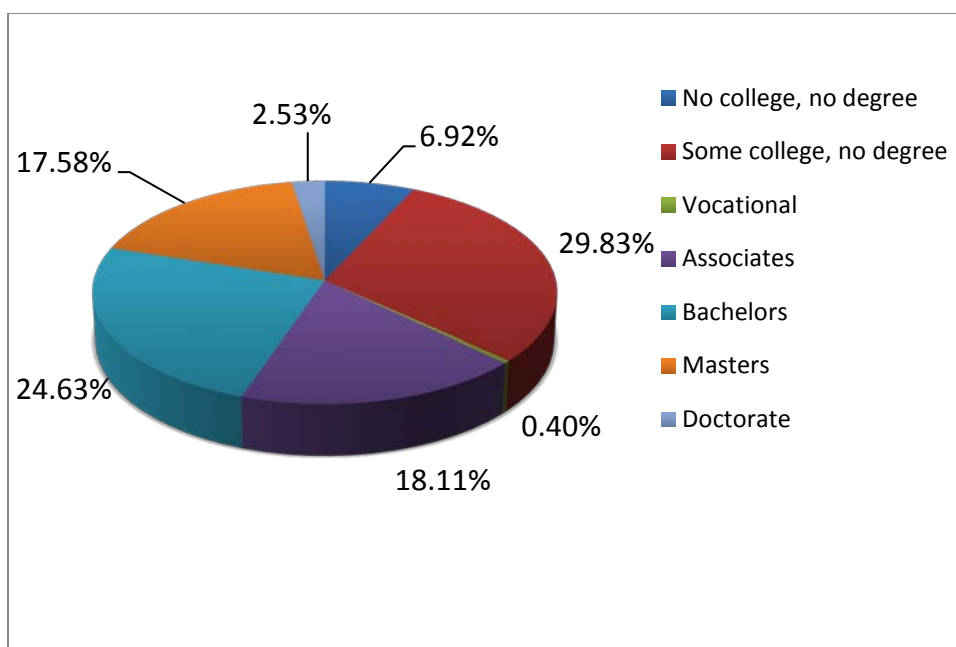


Figure 4. Respondents' education level

Of the total respondents to this survey (751), 50.37% reported being either eldest or only children (all genders). Of the female respondents, 40.75% reported being the eldest with 8.66% saying they were only children, meaning that collectively, 49.41% of the female respondents are either eldest or only children.

Respondents were asked about deaf family members other than parents, and 62.25% of respondents indicated having other signing deaf family members (i.e., siblings, extended family, current partners, and children of their own). To be eligible for this survey, respondents needed to have at least one deaf parent. For the purposes of this study, a parent was defined as the parental figure that lived in respondents' homes and had a significant role in their upbringing. Because a binary deaf or hearing response option did not fit the identity or audiological categories that deaf-parented interpreters

identified with, identity options included a Coda option for the respondents' parent. In figure 5, 92.3% of respondents had two parents who identified as non-hearing; either deaf, deaf of deaf, hard of hearing (identifies as deaf), hard of hearing (identifies as hearing), late-deafened (identifies as deaf), late deafened (identifies as hearing), or deaf-blind, 6.7% had one hearing parent and one non-hearing parent, and 1.1% indicated having one Coda parent and one non-hearing parent.

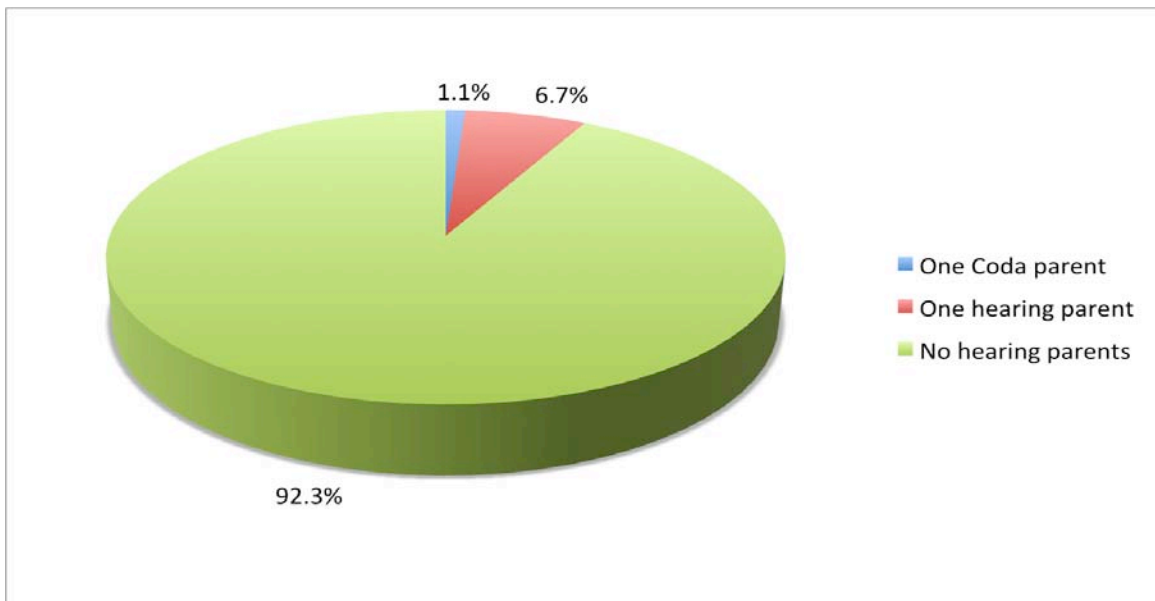


Figure 5. Audiological status of respondents' parents, including Coda as a category

Respondents were asked if they grew up within 60 miles of a residential school for the deaf and/or a large deaf community as well as whether they currently live within 60 miles of their deaf parent to ascertain the likelihood and potential quality and frequency of interactions with the signing deaf community. Figure 6 indicates that 75.7% of the respondents grew up within 60 miles of a residential school for the deaf and/or a large deaf community and 49.67% either currently, or while they were still living, lived

within 60 miles of their deaf parent. The latter was a yes/no question within the survey, but also had an open response category of “other” available. In the open text box accompanying the “other” option, respondents reported that their parents were deceased. The question was worded in the present tense, meaning the respondents were unable to answer the question. Some respondents also indicated that while alive, they did live within 60 miles of their deaf parent. These responses were categorized as *yes*. Some respondents (8.79%) indicated that their parents were deceased but did not indicate one way or another whether they lived within 60 miles of their deaf parent. This response is categorized as *did not specify*.

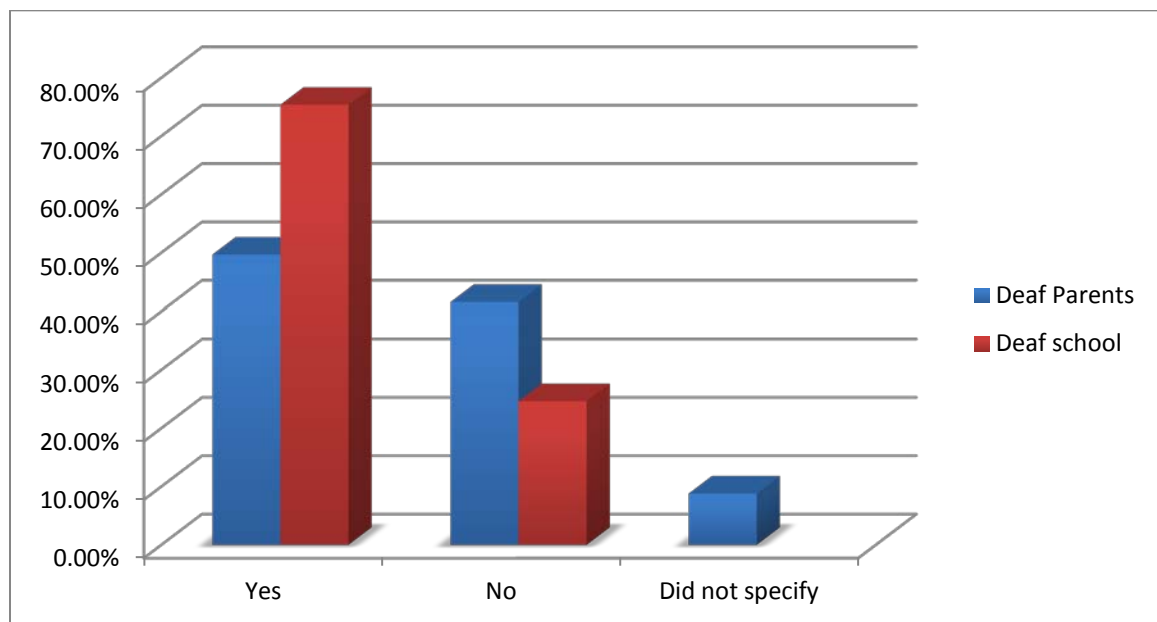


Figure 6. Percentage of respondents who grew up within 60 miles of a school for the deaf or a large deaf community or currently live within 60 miles of deaf parent(s)

### Respondents' professional status

Napier (in press) found that deaf-parented child language brokers started brokering around the age of four to five. Given that brokering is found to happen at such

a young age, this survey asks respondents at what age they first started working as a professional interpreter (Figure 7). Responses ranged the life span but are clustered between the ages of 17 and 22 with 49.8% of the respondents entering the field during that age span. Professional interpreting in this context was largely defined as what it is not: rather than language brokering for family, and perhaps not with credential, respondent were asked at what age they were first viewed as a professional and compensated interpreter.

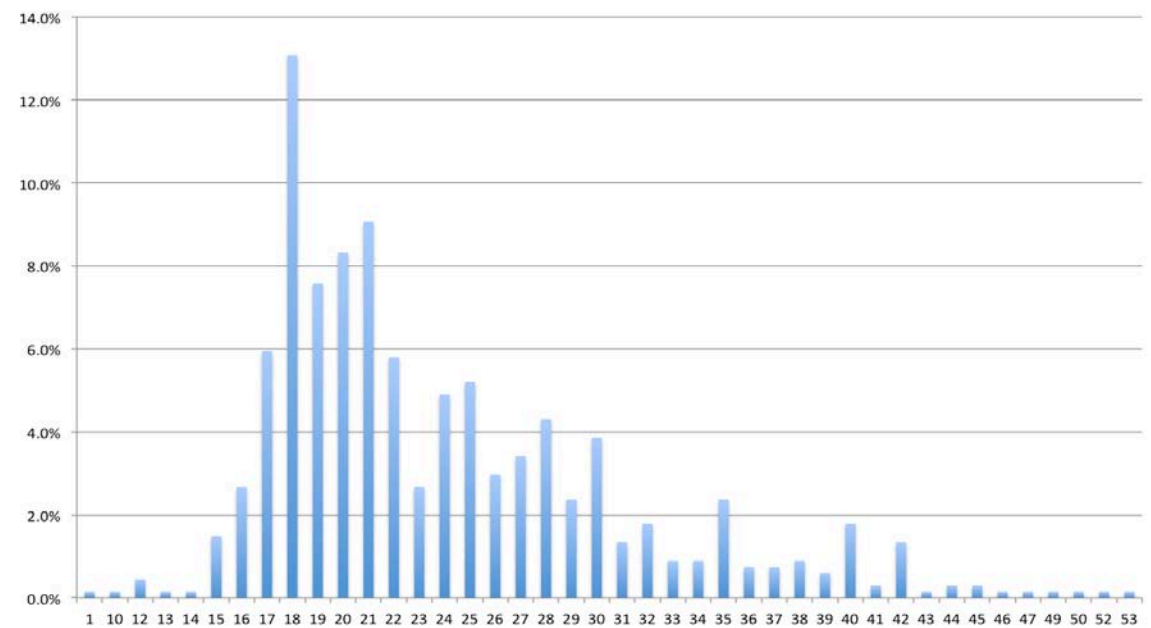


Figure 7. Age of respondents at the time they began professional interpreting

Participants in this study were either currently working as a professional interpreter or had worked as an interpreter in the past. A large majority, 92.54% of the respondents to this survey currently work as interpreters with the remaining 7.46% having worked as an interpreter in the past. Of the total respondents, 86.7% hold a nationally recognized interpreting credential, which, for the purposes of this survey, was

labeled “certified.” Figure 8 differentiates between respondents who currently work as an interpreter and those that no longer work as an interpreter along with their credentialed status. Of the respondents that are currently working, 22.3% are not certified as compared to 46.4% of the respondents who are no longer working and did not hold a certification.

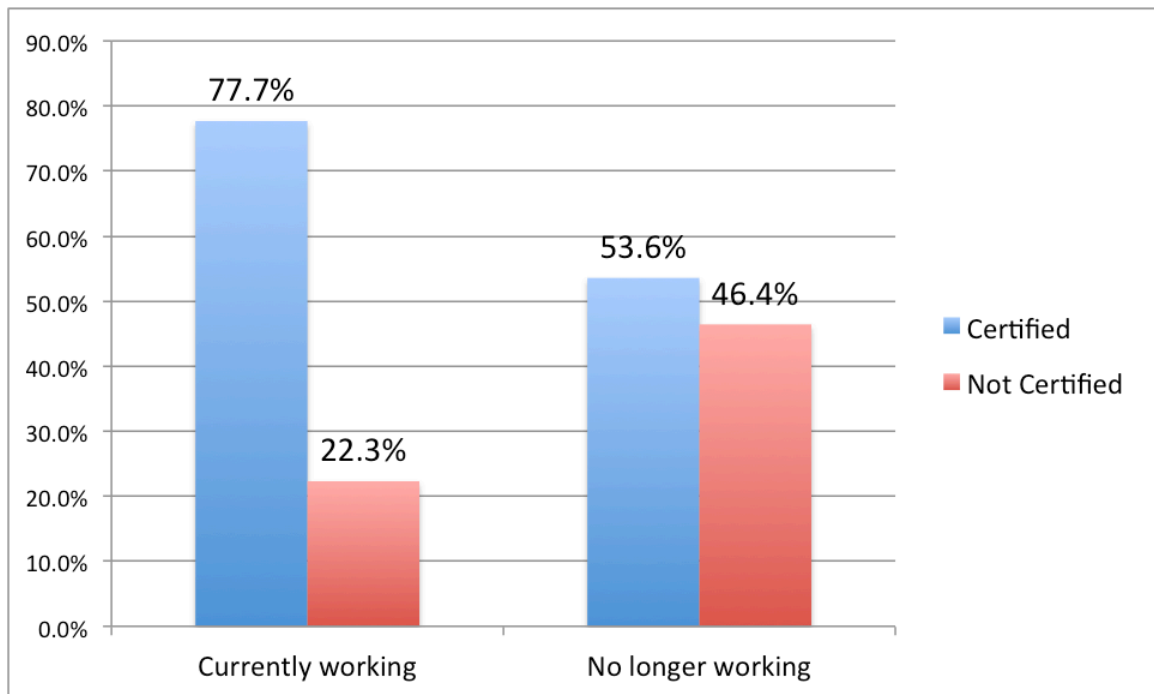


Figure 8. Comparison of respondents currently working and not working and the percentage of respondents holding certification

Cross-tabulating the number of years respondents have worked as an interpreter with the number of years they have held a credential/certification is important because it shows the amount of time it takes a deaf-parented interpreter to achieve a nationally recognized credential. Deaf-parented interpreters enter the field from various entry

points, both formal and informal, and so assessing the readiness to credential gap within this population can be difficult without a marked starting point to measure from. Table 3 shows that most respondents who are currently working as an interpreter, reported working for 21-30 (21.01%) years and attaining a nationally recognized credential within 1-4 years (44.03%). For the most part, respondents reported attaining certification within five years (61.73%). Almost half (49.4% or 42) of the 12.23%, (n=85) who reported not having a credential at all have been working as an interpreter for less than 5 years.

How long to get credentialed?	How long working as an interpreter							Totals	Percent
	Less than 5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	more than 40 years		
I have no credential	42	16	10	4	4	7	2	85	12.23%
0 years	23	40	17	12	13	13	5	123	17.70%
1-4 years	20	52	46	43	69	52	24	306	44.03%
5-9 years		7	29	14	29	10	19	108	15.54%
10-15 years	1		2	11	20	8	3	45	6.47%
16-20 years				2	9	3	1	15	2.16%
> 21 years	1				2	7	3	13	1.87%
Totals	87	115	104	86	146	100	57	695	100%
Percentage	12.52%	16.55%	14.96%	12.37%	21.01%	14.39%	8.20%	100%	

**Table 3. Number of years respondents have worked as an interpreter cross-tabulated with the number of years before attaining credential(s)**

Further analysis of this data shows that the respondents no longer working as an interpreter (n=56) fell largely into two categories: less than 5 years (30.4%) and more than 26 years (23.2%) (Figure 9). This bilateral distribution of responses can account for retirees at one end of the spectrum and individuals that decided interpreting was not the right career for them at the other end.



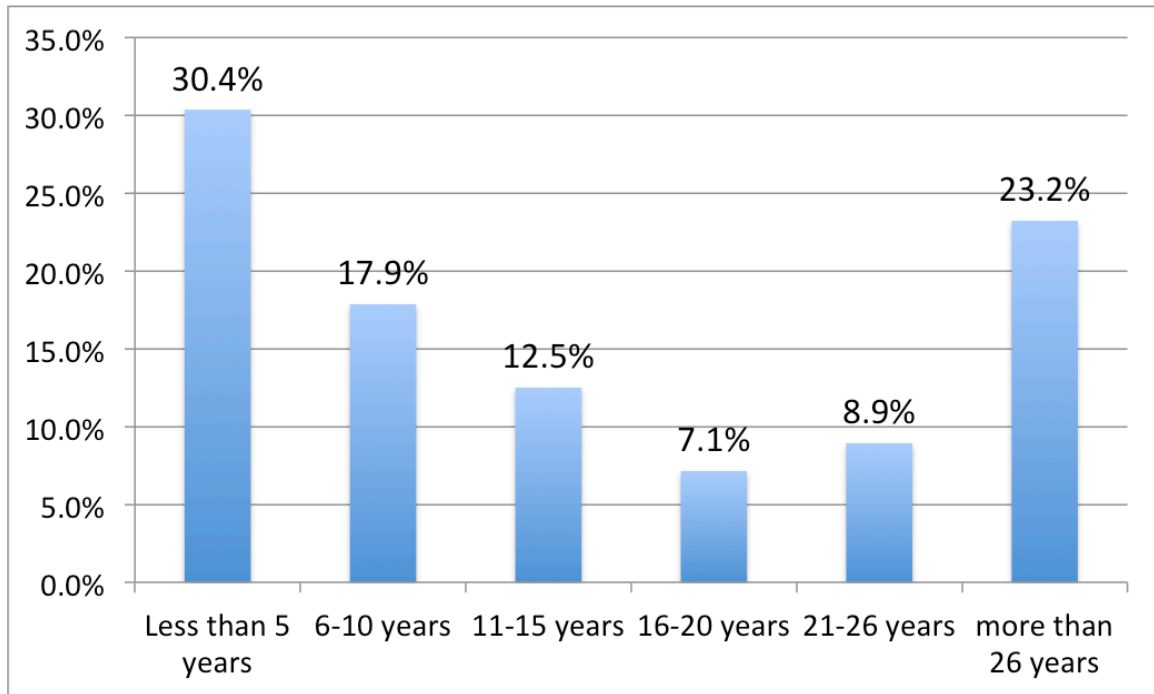


Figure 9. Number of years worked by respondents who are no longer working as an interpreter by percentage

Of the total respondents both working and no longer working, 125 who did not hold certification cited reasons that fell into one of eight thematic categories: no longer interpreting, feeling disenfranchised from RID, working toward certification, certification not required to work, can not pass the certification exam, no time or money, do not have prerequisite education/degree, and fear. Table 4 outlines these thematic categories and includes a sampling of the comments made by respondents when asked why they do not hold a nationally recognized certification.

Response Category	Comment
<b>No longer interpreting (career change, health reason, retired) (20.8%)</b>	This isn't what I plan on doing for the rest of my life. This job I keep falling back to because it's what I know. I hope to pursue other ventures soon and move on with things I see myself doing more long-term.
<b>Feel disenfranchised (14.4%)</b>	Got tired of spending so much time to earn ceus when much of the training was irrelevant.
<b>New interpreter/working toward (8%)</b>	In the process of getting my CDI certification
<b>Certification not required to work (7.2%)</b>	My job does not provide any incentive to become certified I.E. no pay raise or promotion so I have not found it necessary to focus on.
<b>Can't pass the exam (11.2%)</b>	I have tried to pass the written test 6 times for the NIC and I can not because of the English tricky questions.
<b>No time or money (12%)</b>	I haven't taken the time to take the test.
<b>No degree/education prerequisite (19.2%)</b>	I have been going back to school while working. I will be taking my tests this fall.
<b>Fear (7.2%)</b>	I'm scared to fail... People have high expectations of me.

Table 4. Respondents' reasons for not holding a nationally recognized credential

### Respondents' language profile

Given the presence of at least one deaf parent, the likelihood that a child will acquire both the signed language and the dominant spoken language of the community is an arguably safe assumption. This study focuses on American Sign Language and English bilinguals and asks them which language they consider their first language. This study offered respondents the possible answers of ASL, English, both ASL and English, or other as first languages. A majority of the respondents (57.9%) report that ASL is their first language (Figure 10). A question design that did not force respondents to choose one language over the other lead to 36.4% of the respondents choosing both ASL and English

as their first language. A few (1.6%) respondents reported having first languages other than ASL, ASL and English, or English; however every other response was a signed language as a first language (i.e. ASL and Spanish, Japanese Sign Language. No respondents reported a sole spoken language, other than English, as their first language. When forced to choose between ASL or English as the language preference, 56.7% chose ASL and the remaining 43.3% chose English.

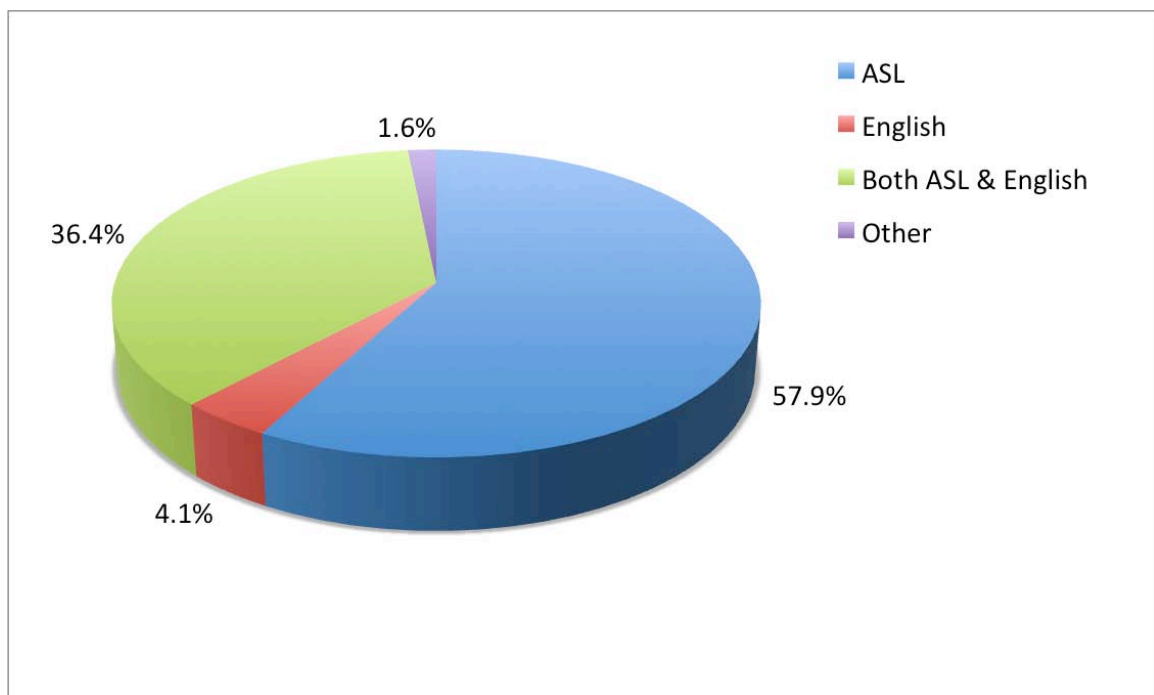


Figure 10. First language(s) of respondents

For this study, an adaptation of the questions from the Survey of demographic and self-identification for heritage learners of Mexican descent linguistic proficiency rating was used (Gignoux, 2009). Respondents were asked to rate their own language skills

(Table 5). On a Likert scale of 1=does not understand and cannot sign, 2=understands but cannot sign, 3=understands and can sign with great difficulty, 4=understands and signs with difficulty, 5= understands and signs comfortably, with little difficulty, 6= understands and signs fluently like a native user, respondents rated their own ASL skills at 5.83. When asked to rate their English skills on a Likert scale of 1=does not understand and can not read/write, 2=understands but can not read/write, 3=understands and can write with great difficulty, 4= understands and reads/writes with difficulty, 5= understands and reads/writes comfortably, with little difficulty, 6= understands and reads fluently like a native user, respondents reported an average of 4.74. The difference means that respondents self-report a mean score 1.09 higher in ASL language skills than they do in English language skills.

Language skill – self rating	Mean score
English ability	4.74
ASL ability	5.83

Table 5. Respondents' self-rating of ASL and English Abilities on a scale of 1 to 6

In order to better understand the language self-rating of respondents, respondents were asked to list what skills they would like to improve in both ASL and English. Table 6 lists the most common themes found in the responses for both languages. The question was worded generally to include responses of both expressive and receptive skills in the language. In both languages, vocabulary is cited as the area most in need of

improvement. To drill down on this question further, in the ASL language category respondents reported wanting to improve their knowledge of regional signs, technical signs, vocabulary of young people while interpreting. Receptive and expressive uses of vocabulary were mentioned but usually in the context of interpreting (e.g. “Vocabulary to use while interpreting in a variety of very specific specialized topics”). In the English language category, the responses around vocabulary improvement were stated more generally than was found in the ASL language category. Some of the responses in this category were: “more rich vocabulary,” “increase vocabulary,” and “broaden my vocabulary.”

In Table 6 the thematic category of Fingerspelling is represented within the ASL language skill category among 6.34% (n=47) of the respondents. In analyzing the text box responses within this thematic category, 46.81% (n=22) specify expressive fingerspelling (e.g. needing to slow down) and 25.53% (12) specifying receptive fingerspelling as areas in need of improvement. The remaining 27.66% (n=13) did not specify whether they needed improvement in expressive or receptive fingerspelling.

<b>ASL (n=737)</b>	<b>English (n=704)</b>
<b>Vocabulary (188) 25.51%</b>	Vocabulary (235) 33.38%
<b>Classifiers-Use of Space (108) 14.65%</b>	Grammar/Grammatical Structure (106) 15.06%
<b>Grammar (100) 13.58%</b>	Written Expression (93) 13.21%

**Fingerspelling (47) 6.34%**

Vocal Production (prosody,  
pronunciation, etc.) (66) 9.37%

Table 6. Skills respondents reported wanting to improve in ASL and English

### Parent characteristics

In addition to collecting demographic and cultural data about respondents, this study gathered information about respondents' parents. In this section, demographic information and data about respondents' parents' early linguistic environment will be shared. Parent #1 was identified by the respondent after being provided with this definition: the main parent figure that lived in the respondent's home and had a significant role in their upbringing. Parent #2 was defined as a second parent figure that lived in the respondent's home while growing up and had a part in their upbringing and was also identified by the respondent. To account for diverse family makeup, these definitions were left intentionally vague. Respondents were given the option of identifying each parental relationship as a mother, father, stepmother, stepfather or other.

In addition to identifying parental relationships, respondents were forced to choose an identity category for both parent #1 and parent #2 that combined auditory status with identity (i.e., hard of hearing (identifies as deaf) or late deafened (identifies as hearing). A binary (deaf or hearing) response would not suffice for capturing the nuances of identity and auditory status of individuals within the deaf community. This survey also

gave the option to identify a parent as Deaf-Blind, a category that is overlooked with a binary deaf/hearing option. Figure 11 shows parent #1's parental relationship and identity. 56.6% of the respondents identified their deaf mother as Parent #1 and 20.8% of the respondents identified their deaf father as Parent #1.

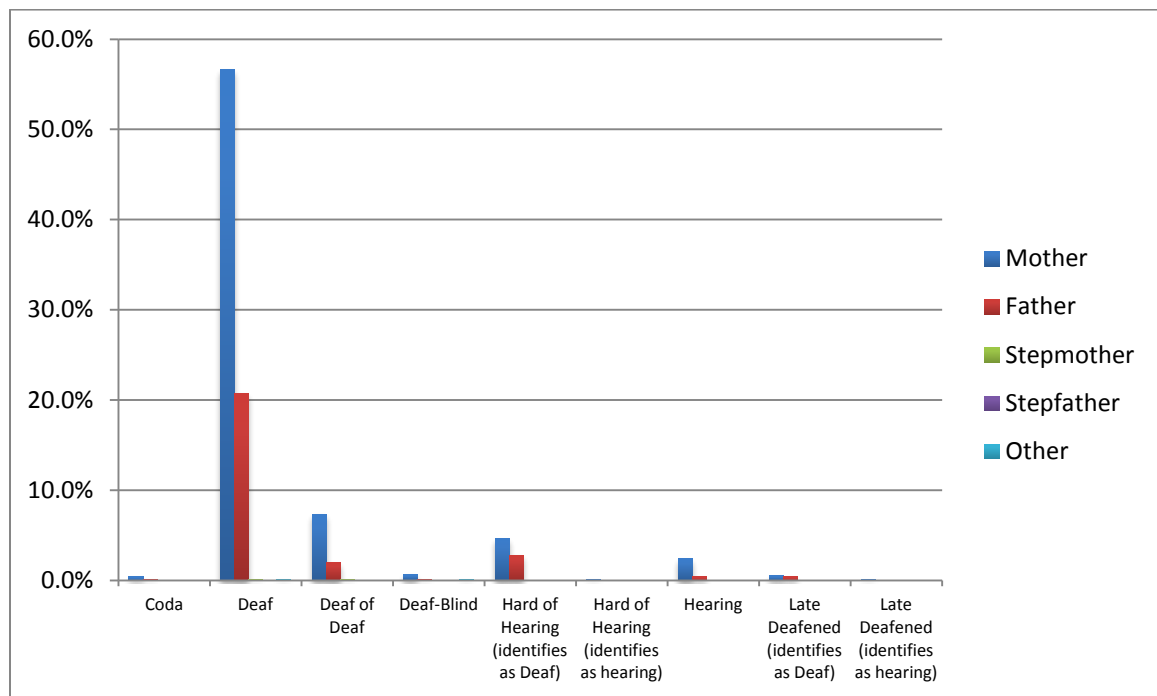


Figure 11. Reported identity categories of respondents' Parent #1

Parent #2 was most often (51.8%) identified to be the respondent's deaf father with 19.7% reporting their deaf mother as Parent #2 (Figure 12).

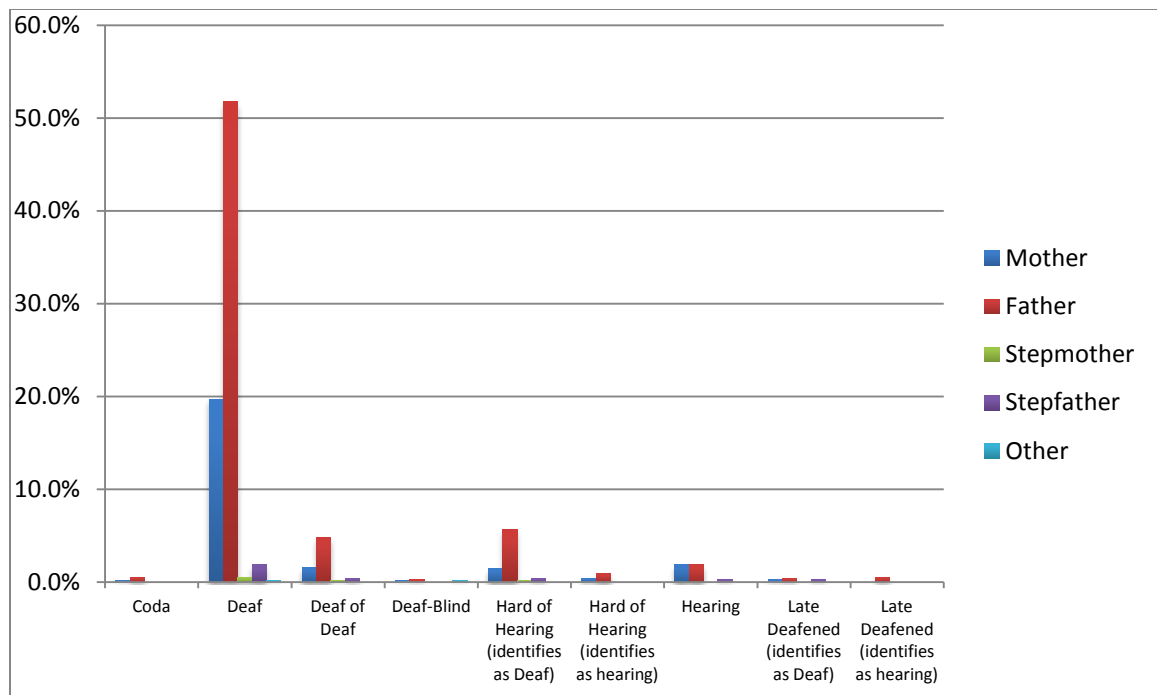


Figure 12. Reported identity categories of respondents' Parent #2

## Parents' language profile

This survey collects data to determine parents' language competence in signed and spoken/written language. In addition to the reported language skills, data was collected on educational and linguistic factors that may have influenced parents' language competencies.

Over a third (39.4%) of the parents were reported to have learned a signed language before the age of five. Age of signed language acquisition is collected as a data point that can be used in comparison with language fluency. Figure 13 shows the distribution of age that parents of respondents acquired a signed language.



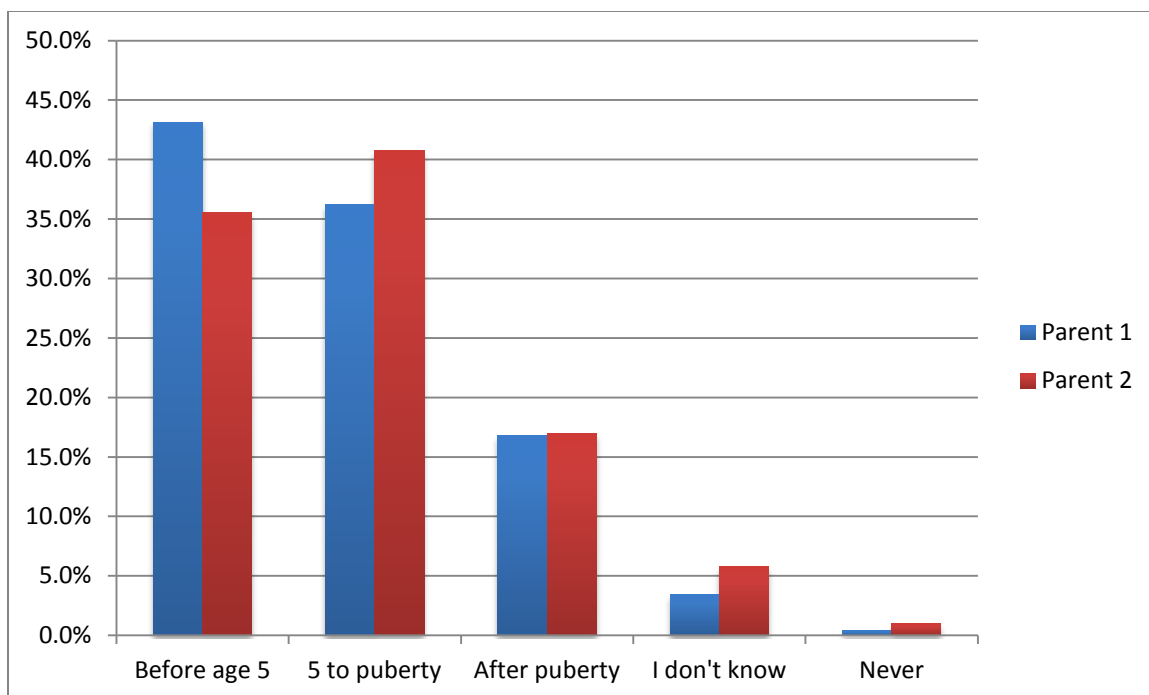


Figure 13. Age respondents reported parents acquired signed language

The survey included a question about attendance at a school for the deaf where signed language was used to better understand the parents' linguistic environment while growing up. Respondents were allowed to choose more than one age range to account for parents that may have attended a school for the deaf where signed language was used for only parts of their schooling (e. g., high school only). Options provided were: my parent is not deaf; my parent is deaf but did not attend a school for the deaf where signed language was used; attended before the age of 5; attended between the ages of 5 and puberty; attended after puberty; I don't know if they attended or not; and other with an open text box. If a parent attended between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade, the respondent was expected to choose both attended between the ages of 5 and puberty and attended after puberty.

Many other factors<sup>3</sup> influence and confound a question about educational setting and language, making the responses a complicated analytic prospect. In the open text box, respondents made comments such as:

*Attended a school for the deaf but NO signing allowed in 1940's in classes. But she signed secretly to girls.*

*My father was mainstreamed with a deaf program.*

Some (20.3%) of the parents did not complete high school. Figure 14 portrays the education level of parents of respondents. This figure includes all parents, regardless of auditory status.

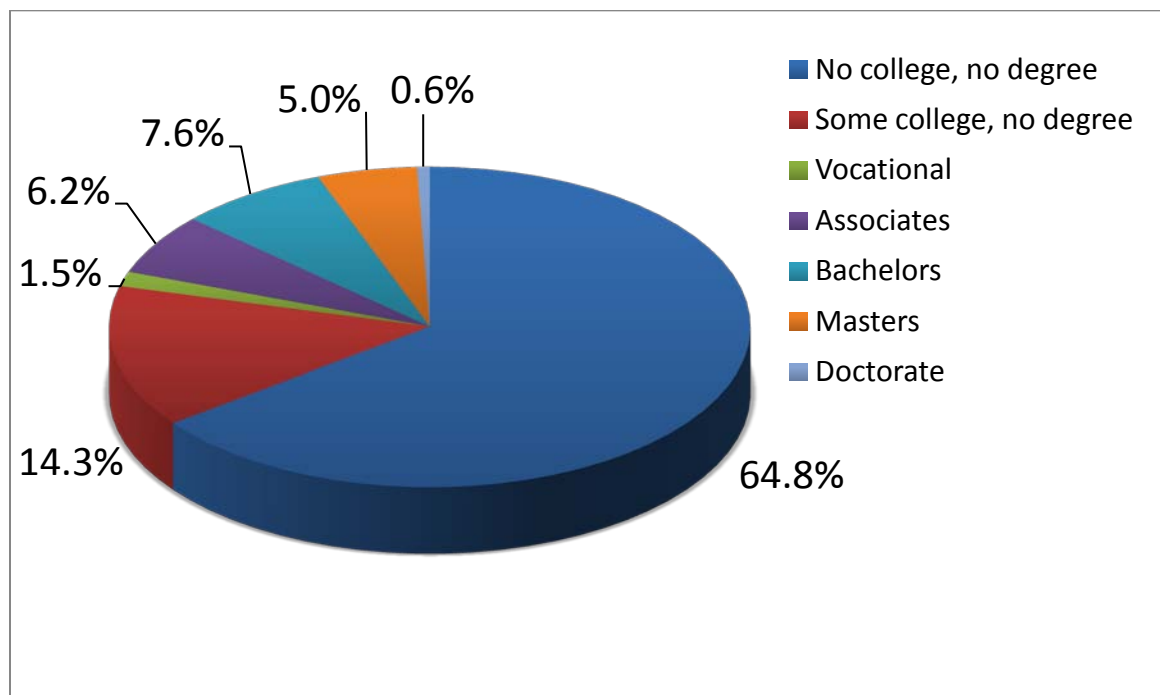


Figure 14. Education level of parents as reported by respondents

<sup>3</sup> These factors refer to the many complex issues found within the deaf community and the field of deaf education. Language modality and educational placement, among other aspects of the deaf educational experience, are difficult to quantify and cannot be fairly discussed within the scope of this study.

While the scope of this study does not include an examination of socioeconomic status and its effect on higher education outcomes, a significant portion (79.1%) of the deaf parents did not attend college or did attend but did not complete a degree. Of the deaf-parented respondents, 36.75% did not attend college or did attend but did not complete a degree.

Using the same language skill assessment the respondents used to self-report their own language proficiency, respondents were asked to rank their parents' overall language ability in ASL and English on a Likert scale of one to six. The data represented in Table 7 includes all parents regardless of their auditory status. The mean score for parent's ASL language ability was reported at 5.71 and the mean score for English ability was reported at 4.40. The use of English was limited to reading/writing to separate out the ability to speak and/or speechread.

Language skill – self rating	Mean score
English ability	4.40
ASL ability	5.71

Table 7. Respondents' rating of parents' ASL and English abilities on a scale of 1 to 6

Respondents were asked in a question separately from the one about their parents' overall language ability about deaf parents' voice and/or speech intelligibility. When asked whether other (non-signing) hearing people understood the deaf parent's

voice/speech, 10.4% responded always, 45.8% sometimes, and 43.8% never. Evaluations of voice/speech by others for hearing and Coda parents are not included in this data set.

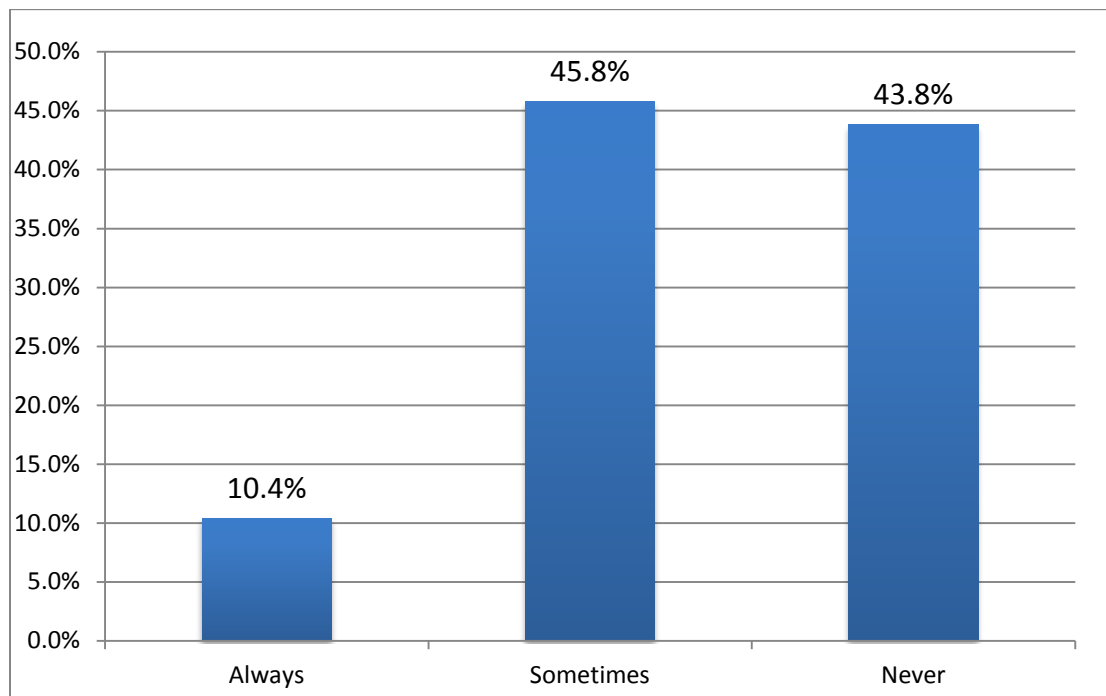


Figure 15. Respondents' rating of intelligibility of parents' voice/speech to hearing non-signers

### Early linguistic environment

The respondents' early linguistic environment contributes to their signed language competency. To understand that environment better, respondents were asked how parents communicated with each other and with the respondent before the age of five and between the ages of 5 and puberty (whenever that might have been for the respondent). Respondents were also asked how they communicated with their siblings. The results of this question are further complicated by the number and family relationship other deaf family members may have, e. g., if there were deaf siblings, then the respondent may be more likely to sign with siblings than would a respondent with all Coda siblings. In

Figure 16 the predominance of ASL as the language of the home is made clear among parents and between parents and children; however there are also respondents that report communicating with parents through code-blending, signing and speaking at the same time. With siblings, who are mostly Codas, English is the predominant language. There is a slight trend toward ASL as the language used by parents after the age of 5 when compared with language use before the age of 5.

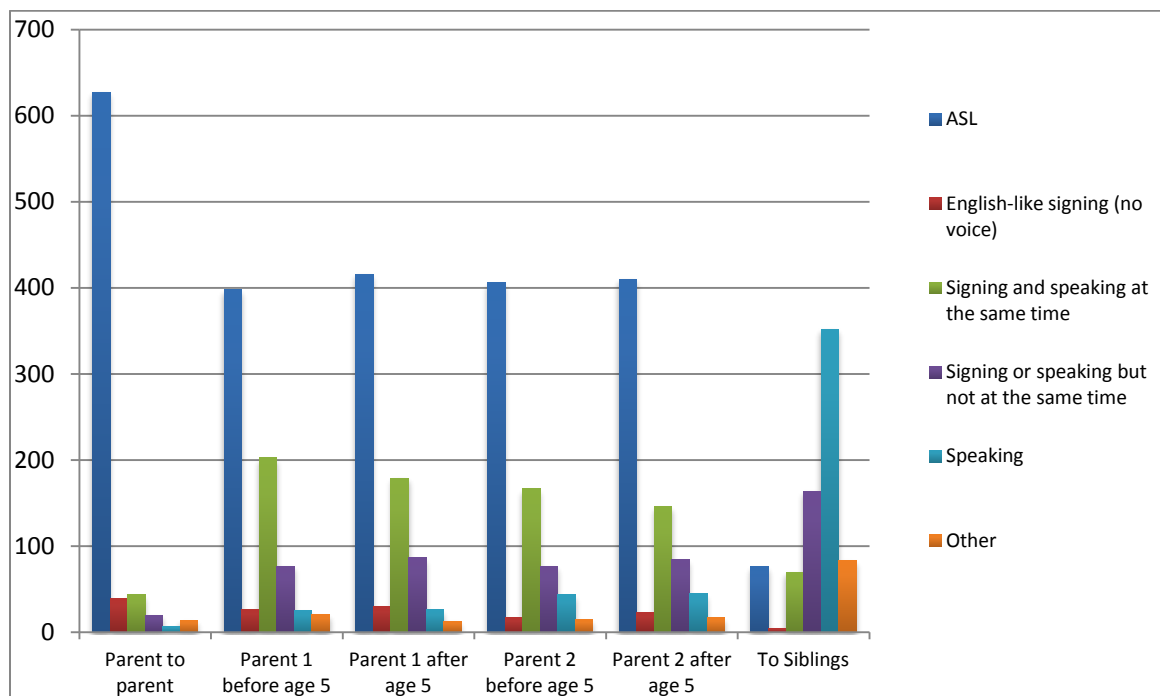


Figure 16. Communication modalities among family members

A majority of the parents (74.7%) encouraged respondents to use signed language as much as possible at home and 71.0% of parents corrected respondents' signing while

growing up. Both of these factors influence an individual's language development and competency by increasing the amount and quality of the language used.

Grandparents also figured in some respondents' childhood: 24.6% of respondents reported living with their grandparents at some point while growing up and 72.97% of those respondents communicated with their grandparents through speaking only.

To further understand the early linguistic environment of deaf-parented individuals, it is helpful to understand who the primary caretakers were before respondents began attending school. When asked about location and language of childcare before the age of 5, 82.4% of respondents reported being cared for exclusively at home where they are likely to have been cared for by a signing parent. A similar question is asked about respondents' play with other deaf-parented children. A large number (94.5%) responded that they did play with other deaf-parented children and in that play close to half (49.3%) used at least some signs (ASL, speaking and signing at the same time, English-like signing, or signing or speaking but not at the same time) during that play. The auditory status of the respondent and of the deaf-parented children in their environment would have an influence on how this question was answered.

Contact with non-family deaf community members who signed also played a role in early linguistic development for respondents. At least once every two weeks, both before the age of 5 and between the ages of 6 and puberty, 85.0% of the respondents reported having contact with deaf signing non-relatives. Figure 17 shows a slight downtrend in frequency of interaction with these non-family signers as the respondent got older.

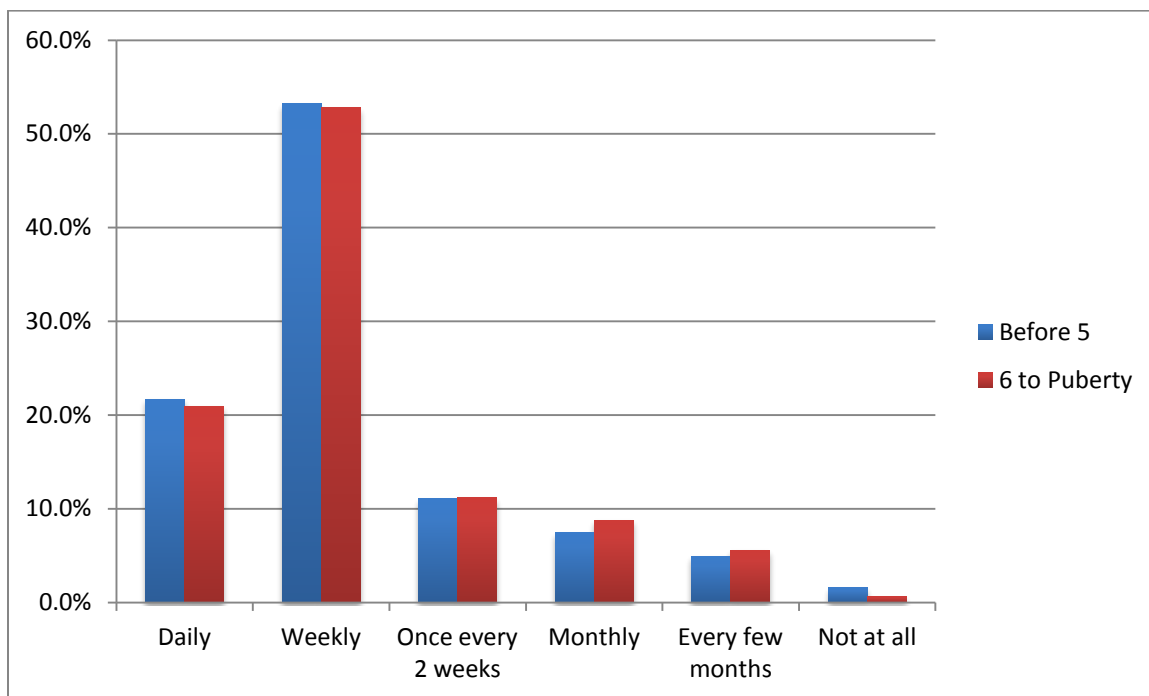
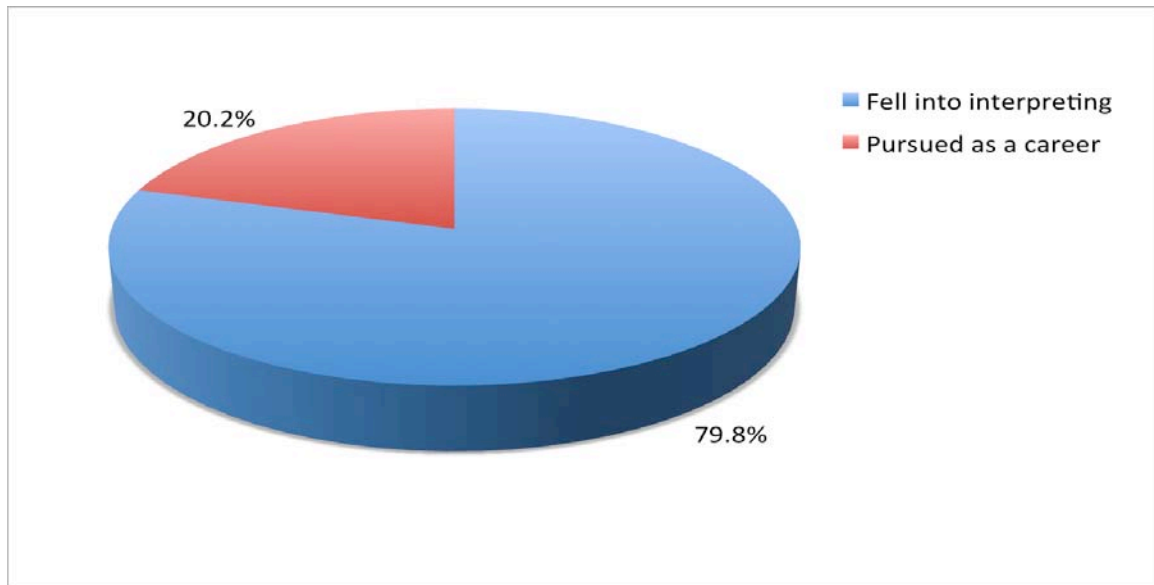


Figure 17. Frequency of respondents' contact with signing deaf community members who were not relatives

### Interpreting and interpreter training

Of the respondents in this study, 92.4% reported that they currently broker for family and friends. A large percentage of those saying that they do not currently broker noted that their deaf parents, whom they used to broker for, have passed away. The survey attempted to define professional interpreting as separate from language brokering by describing it as “interpreting for non-family members or for money or some other compensation.” The initial qualifying question to the survey asks if the respondent now or has ever worked as a professional ASL/English interpreter. Individuals that responded that they have not interpreted (n=37) were booted out of the survey. The next qualifying question asked whether the respondent had one or more deaf parent to which 47

respondents said that they did not and were not allowed to continue on to the rest of the survey. It is possible that the first 37 respondents had one or more deaf parent but they did not make it to that question because they were not ASL/English interpreters. Of the remaining, qualifying, responses (n=751), Figure 18 shows that 79.8% reported having ‘fell into interpreting’ as opposed to pursuing it as a career.



**Figure 18. Percentage of respondents who report entering the interpreting profession intentionally versus entering in a happenstance fashion**

The happenstance of such a profession entry was not limited to respondents alone and sometimes was reported to be a family affair, as 34.8% of the respondents reported having a sibling that is currently or has worked as a professional signed language/English interpreter as well. Having a sibling as an interpreter may have an impact on one’s entry into the profession and/or support system within the onramp experience. If only children were factored out of the total count, this percentage may be higher.



Only 34.9% of the parents suggested or encouraged the respondent to become an interpreter when they grew up. To this question about whether parents had an influence on respondents' decision to enter the profession, respondents commented:

*They encouraged me when my work career situation changed when my own family grew in size where flexibility was needed.*

*My parents wanted us to pursue other fields but use interpreting as a backup plan*

*Indirectly, considering my parents were Deaf, the idea of deaf interpreter professionally was a new concept. for them they call them communication clarifier. thats pretty much how my parent views me and tells me I can do*

Upon entering the profession of interpreting, 39% of the deaf-parented interpreter respondents reported attending an IEP for any length of time (Figure 19). Of those attending an IEP, 28.5% reported actually completing the program and out of those that attended, 10.9% attended 2 or more IEPs.

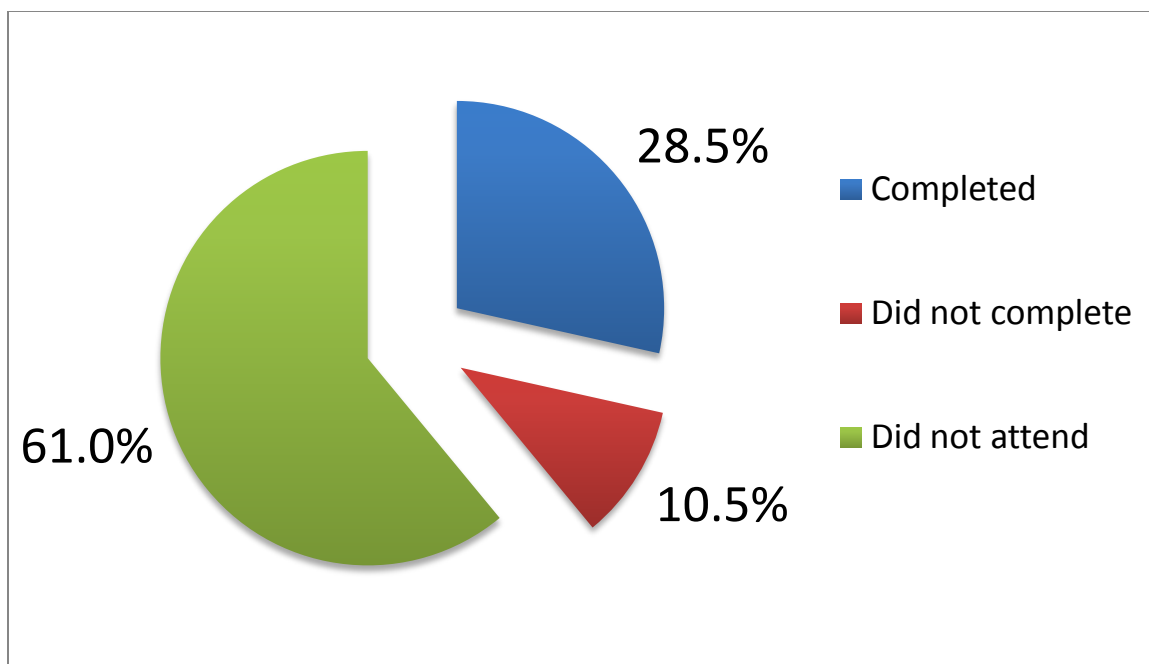


Figure 19. Percentage of respondents who attended and/or completed an IEP

When all respondents were asked in an open-ended question why they did not complete an IEP program, there were 92 (12.25%) text responses. Respondents cited issues with instructors/classmates/programs (38.04%), selectively taking certain desired classes (labeled as “picking and choosing”) within the program (19.57%), attaining certification or a job as an interpreter while in the program and therefore leaving (17.39%), logistical issues (e.g. moving/money/time) (10.89%), being currently enrolled in a program (7.6%), deciding to not pursue interpreting (3.26%), and health reasons (3.26%).

Category	Comment
<b>Issues with instructors/classmates/programs (38.04%)</b>	<p>Very difficult as a CODA everyone wanted to buddy up with me. Instructors were always using me as a tool.</p> <p>The teachers did not know how to work with me. I already had the skills and most of the time they were spoon feeding everyone else and I was left bored. I tried to find ways to challenge myself with topics to research but the teachers were not supportive of anything I did outside the curriculum.</p>
<b>Picking and choosing classes within the program (19.57%)</b>	<p>Not plan to complete ITP. Took intro to intp and deaf culture to review for rid written test.</p> <p>I wanted and needed to take specific courses relating to Medical Interpreting; Ethics; Professional Responsibilities; etc</p>
<b>Attaining certification or a job as an interpreter while in the program (17.39%)</b>	<p>Achieved CI and CT mid program</p> <p>Was offered a full time job interpreting for a school district</p>
<b>Logistical issues like moving/money/time (10.89%)</b>	<p>Moved away for my husbands job</p> <p>Had to work to support family (parents)</p>
<b>Being currently enrolled in a program (7.6%)</b>	I'm currently in the program.
<b>Deciding to not pursue interpreting (3.26%)</b>	Got bored and realized I didn't want to become an interpreter
<b>Health reasons (3.26%)</b>	I was involved in a car accident that rendered my arm useless (until I had surgery).

**Table 8. Respondent's reported reasons for not completing an IEP**

Interpreter education programs are not the only option in training for an individual pursuing work in connection to the deaf community. Some respondents (12.8%) reported post-secondary majors in a deaf-related field that was not interpreting.

When respondents who did not attend a formal interpreter-training program were asked to list the steps taken to learn how to be professional interpreter, respondents

reported informal networks like mentoring, learning from the deaf community, and workshops. They also said:

*Many many Interpreter Training Weekend workshops, weeklong training in the summer, extensive work with Deaf Community, training videos, whatever resource I could get my hands/eyes on.*

*I attended all the workshops available in my area and joined interpreting organizations, reading whatever materials they had to offer. I also attend several technical college courses relating to working with children. I learned by watching professional interpreters in action at workshops and events, networking and talking with professional interpreters. I was fortunate to have so many great role models in my area. I worked in the educational setting, learning on the job for 8 years before I felt I was ready to take the RID testing to become certified. Then I prepared for the certification by reading everything that I could get my hands on that was related to the interpreting profession and the testing process in particular.*

*Absorb everything my teams did like a sponge*

*I learned from the community of Deaf, CODAs and interpreters in my community. I learned from the school of hard knocks where I made many mistakes and had people surrounding me and giving me good direction. I began observing those that I respected in the field and learned from their work.*

*I learned on the job as an outreach specialist for a large interpreting agency in DC. I then took a 16-hour CDI pre-qualification workshop, and then read "So You Want to be an Interpreter?" by Humphrey and Alcorn.*

*It was more of a baptism by fire experience for me. I worked with other seasoned interpreters & VRS largely shaped my ability to interpret for a variety of people.*

*I modeled myself after other codas with whom I worked.*

*Listened to Deaf people and what they wanted via conversational interactions. Attended workshops and generally observed professionals and emulated the behavior I found had merit.*

*I never took any steps apart from getting certified. I was given an interpreter job at the age of 19 before I was certified.*

*Other than the brief mentoring, it was "fake it 'til you make it." I could fake it well enough because I was a fluent signer and because I grew up observing lots of interpreters. I look back at my early interpreting days and cringe.*

*I was hired by Sorenson and went through their "VIP" program where a certified interpreter mentor provided me guidance and exposure to sign language interpreting. I then took the RID tests and passed and with work, I gained more experience and confidence to be a sign language interpreter*

Nonetheless, interpreter education programs play a role in a significant number of respondent's induction into the field; 39.1% (294) of the respondents reported attending an IEP. Out of those that attended, 10.9% attended 2 or more IEPs. Respondents attended a variety of programs in various geographic locations that include certificate programs, AA, BA, and MA degrees. When asked if the IEP met the deaf-parented interpreter's needs, a majority (62.1%) said that it did very well (Figure 20). The question allowed respondents to choose more than one option in response

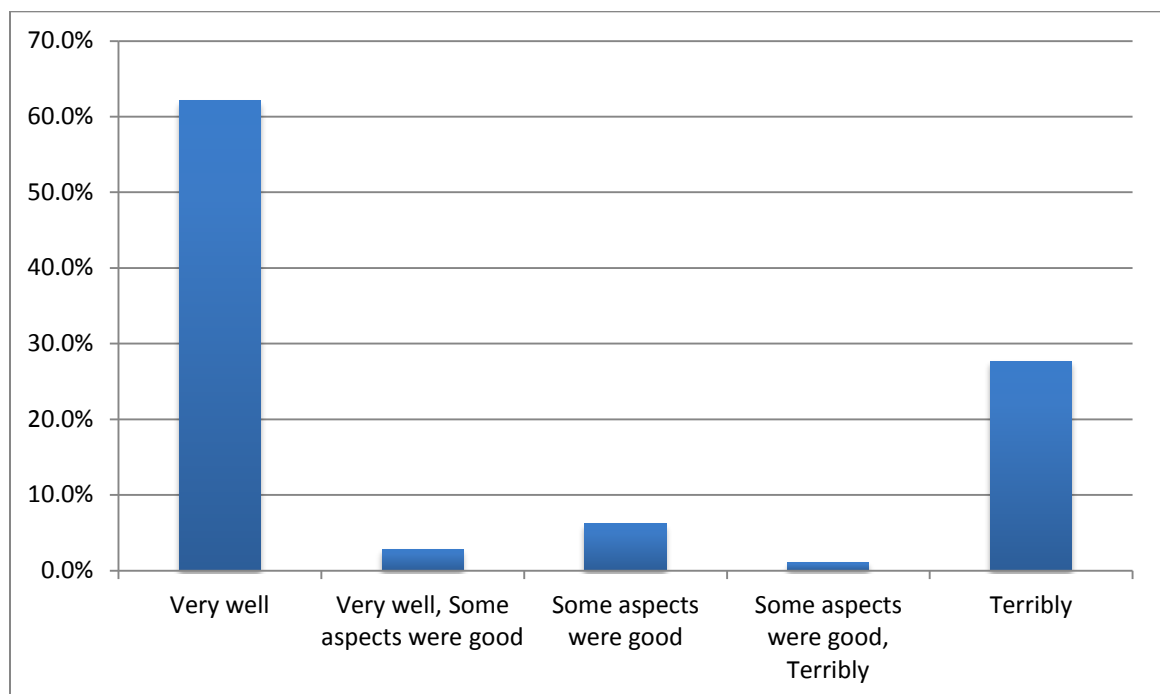


Figure 20. Respondents' rating of how well an IEP met their needs

Respondents were asked how many deaf-parented instructors they had in their program and whether having or not having these instructors had an impact on their program experience. Figure 21 shows the relationship between having and not having an instructor that is deaf or deaf-parented and the impact on the deaf-parented student continuing or quitting a program. A total of 138 respondents reported that there were deaf-parented instructors in their first IEP. When asked about how well this program met their needs, 87.7% responded either some aspects were *good* or *very well*. While there are factors not accounted for in this cross-tabulation that may influence program satisfaction or dissatisfaction, there is a correlation between having deaf-parented instructors in the program and general overall satisfaction with the program.

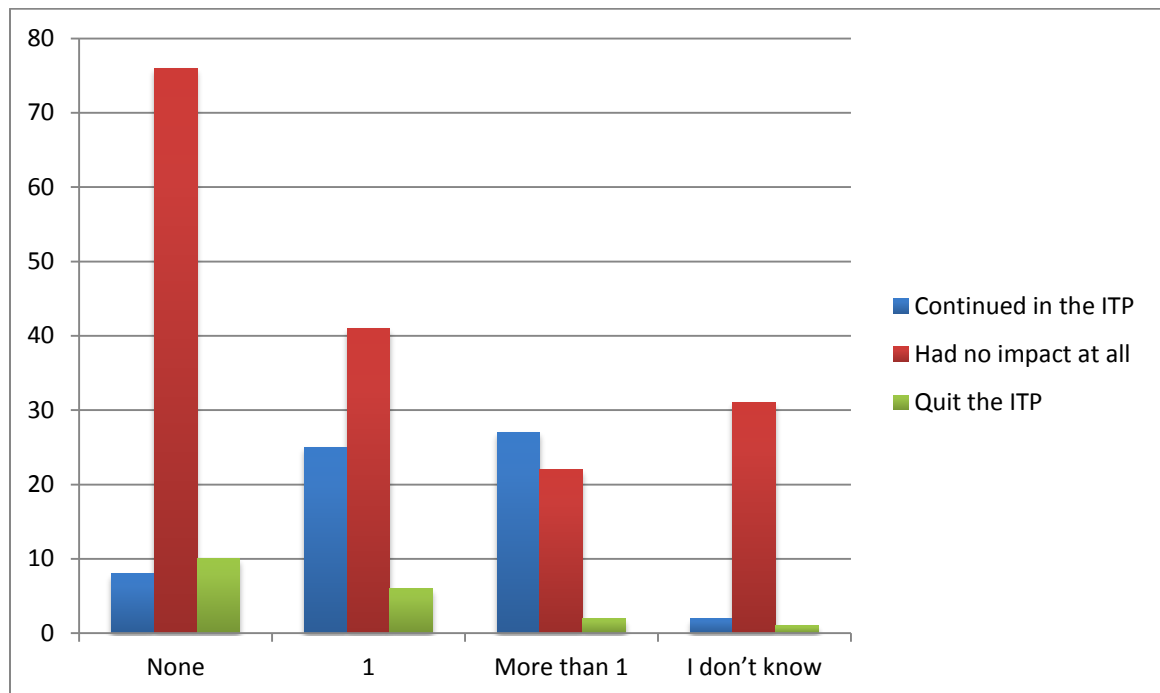


Figure 21. Relationship between presence of deaf-parented instructors in IEP and subsequent impact on experience

Respondents were asked how many deaf-parented classmates they had in their program and whether having or not having these classmates had an impact on their program experience. Figure 22 shows the relationship between having and not having a deaf-parented classmate and the impact on the deaf-parented student continuing or quitting a program. A total of 127 respondents reported that there were one or more deaf-parented students in their first IEP program and 88.2% of them graded the program “some aspects were good” or “very well” in terms of meeting their needs. While there are factors not accounted for in this cross-tabulation that may influence program satisfaction or dissatisfaction, there is a correlation between having deaf-parented classmates in the program and general overall satisfaction with the program.

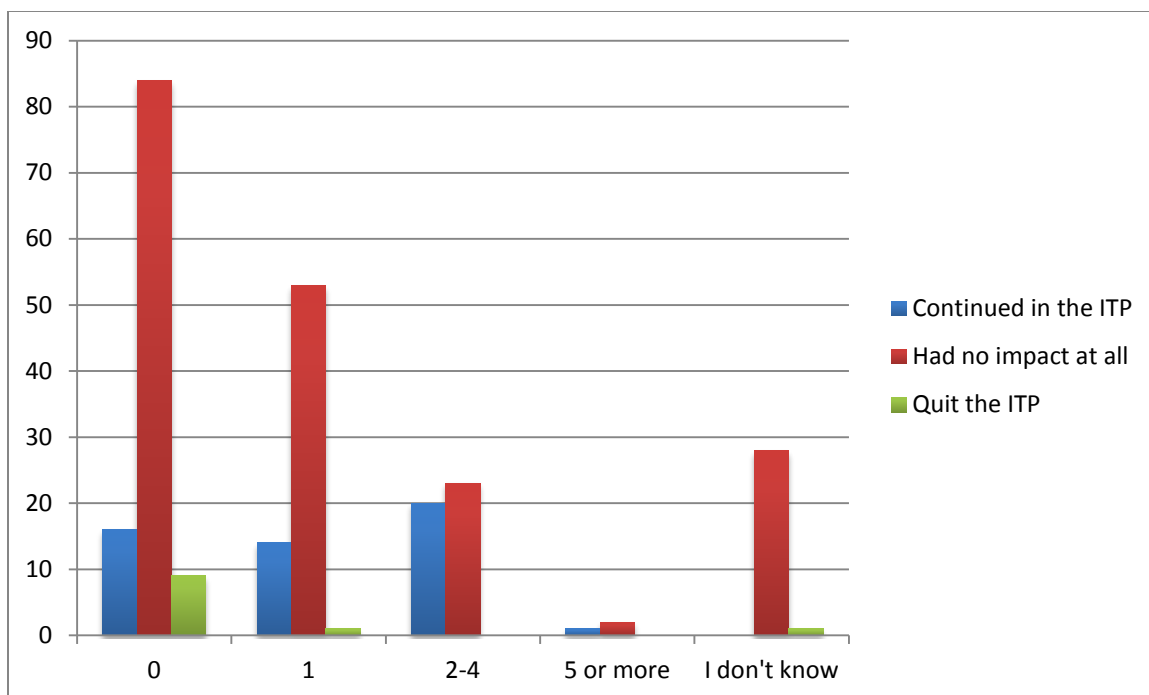


Figure 22. Relationship between presence of deaf-parented classmates in IEP and subsequent impact on experience

Of the students that attended IEPs, 58.4% reported testing out of or being exempt from a curricular or program requirement. These exemptions included ASL, fingerspelling, and deaf culture classes. To gather further data on the deaf-parented interpreters' training experience, all respondents were asked which courses/workshops/trainings were found to be the most and least helpful in becoming a professional interpreter. A typical response in both categories was, "Everything was helpful, even when it wasn't that great. I was hungry to learn." Table 9 shows some of the open text box responses to this question.

The themes that are shown in the quotes in Table 9 indicate that deaf-parented specific education is beneficial in understanding interpreting process and processes of decision-making. Additionally, respondents reported that language, culture, and



linguistics classes were beneficial in understanding ASL and culture. Unfortunately, these are also the classes that are most often cited as the ones deaf-parented IEP students are exempt from. The themes that arose from respondents indications of courses/workshops/trainings were least helpful were ones that were vocabulary driven, fingerspelling, and where the instructor's attitude or behavior were barriers to the deaf-parented interpreter's learning.

Most helpful courses/workshops/trainings	Least helpful courses/workshops/trainings
I took Betty Colonomos' CODA only interpreting workshop which helped me figure out why I make certain interpreting choices and how to deal with being a CODA interpreter. This helped me gain more insight into my work as well as how to handle people's reactions to my being a CODA and not having any formal training.	Ones that were primarily vocabulary driven where we were taught "the sign" for things.
Ethically decision making- I had no boundaries, had no idea what was "appropriate" or "inappropriate"	Fingerspelling and Numbers (skills I already possessed)
ASL Linguistics courses, understanding that ASL is a language, Deaf Culture training, Deaf Studies - all gave me the ability to have educated discourse about who I am and where I come from. And most importantly, this information gave my Deaf heart the pride I was lacking.	When the instructor assumes everyone has attended an IEP

Table 9. Sampling of respondents' description of most and least helpful courses/workshop/training

## Work environments

Half of the respondents (49.3%) reported having full or part-time staff interpreter positions. Below are the responses given by deaf-parented interpreters who hold full or part-time staff interpreter positions (n=370), broken down by those currently working as an interpreter (n=695) and those that no longer work as an interpreter (n=56). 32.8% of the currently working respondents work in a Video Relay Service setting and 33.3% of the respondents that no longer work as an interpreter worked in a K-12 educational setting.

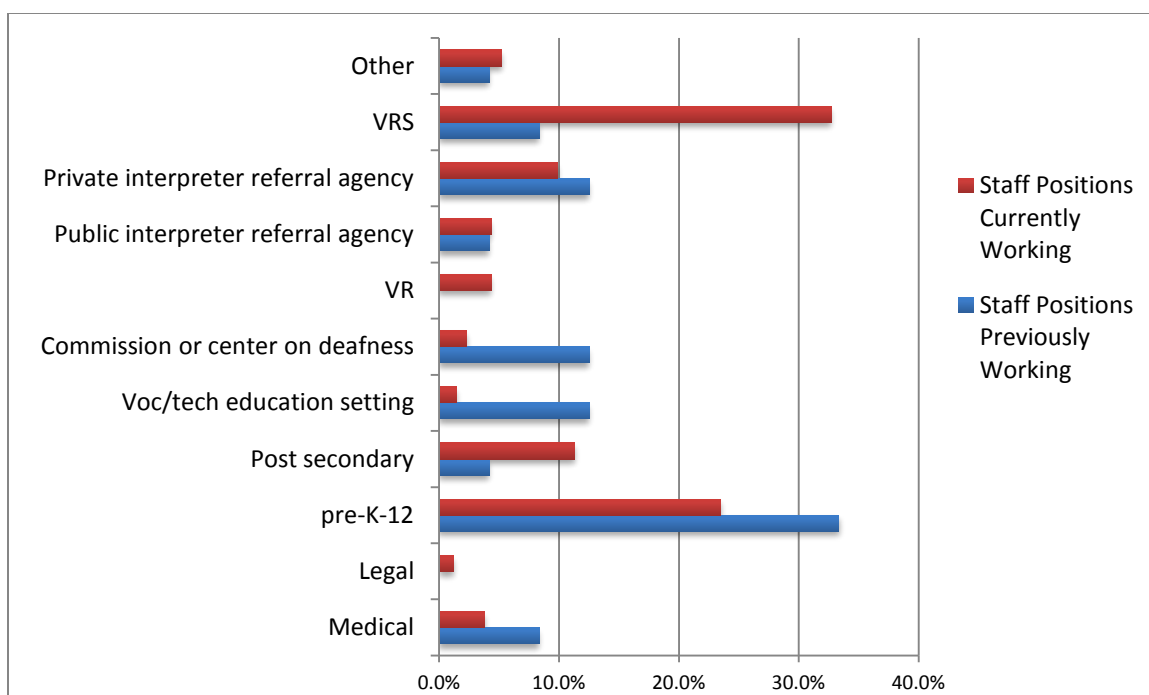


Figure 23. Staff position settings of deaf-parented interpreters, comparing those previously working to those currently working as an interpreter

### Deaf-parented specific training

In the final section of the survey, participants were asked to think about interpreting education gaps, areas of improvement, and opportunities for training with interpreters who are deaf in a series of open and closed questions. There is insufficient deaf-parented interpreter training to help develop their professional skills and knowledge, said 74.2% of the respondents. They would like to see more. Given the respondents' experience wherein 76.1% of them expressed an interest in having separate training courses for the deaf-parented interpreter integrated into interpreter training and 82.2% of the respondents reported that deaf-parented and deaf interpreters could or should be trained together exploring these options within interpreter education is warranted.

## **Focus groups**

In the initial design of this study, the hope was to conduct two focus groups with deaf-parented interpreters, one group of IEP attendees and one group of non-IEP attendees in an attempt to better understand the onramp and induction experiences of deaf-parented interpreters. When survey participants were asked if they would like to be involved in further study, 76.7% (576) of the respondents opted in for further study on the topic of deaf-parented interpreters.

Those 576 respondents were sent an email with a link to a 10-question Google form survey designed to elicit demographic data to include location in the country, number of years interpreting, age, gender, audiological status, interpreting credentials, and whether or not the deaf-parented interpreter attended an interpreter education program. These demographic characteristics would have been used to create diverse focus groups. In addition to these questions, respondents were asked if they had access to high speed internet and a webcam and if they were available for either or both proposed dates and times given during which they could participate in focus groups via video conference technology. This survey can be found in Appendix B.

The initial survey data was determined to be enough for the scope of this study and the decision was made to halt the establishment of focus groups until the initial survey data could be analyzed. The follow up survey went out to 576 respondents and remained open from September 1, 2014 until Sept 8, 2014. During the one-week that the survey was open, 390 (67.71% of the 576 respondents who opted in) deaf-parented

interpreters who were available for one of the potential focus group date/times completed the survey expressing interest in being a part of a focus group.

## DISCUSSION

### **Respondent characteristics**

A majority of the survey respondents identified as white, straight, middle-aged females. This homogeneous population is mirrored among the RID membership and the needs assessment survey respondents of the NCIEC. However, there are more males who identify as deaf-parented than not. This demographic trend indicates that males who grow up in deaf-parented homes may be more likely to become ASL/English interpreters as compared to males that do not.

Of greater concern among the pictures painted by the respondent characteristics collected in this survey and reflected among other data sets is the lack of representation of interpreters of color in general and deaf-parented interpreters in particular. Interpreters do not mirror the population, both signing and non-signing, that they are serving.

The survey asks respondents to choose options indicating their auditory status with the acknowledgement that all participants in the survey are deaf-parented. Being deaf or hearing is an audiological condition but is also a culture and way of being. Individuals who grow up with deaf parents may more closely identify with the deaf community than the non-deaf community (Preston, 1994). Witteborg (2013) describes the Coda experience and identity poetically.

The framing is askew when people perceive my coda identity as one that was formulated from being born hearing and having been exposed to the deaf through acculturation. Such thinking is deficit in its foundation. Instead the framing

should reflect that I was born deaf and only later did I internalize a hearing identity. As such my deaf identity was not cultivated by acculturation, it was called into existence through enculturation; deaf by birth right. (E. Witteborg, personal communication, August 31, 2013)

Audiologically hearing respondents who strongly identify with their parents' deaf community may have a difficult time separating out their audiological status from their cultural identity when forced to choose between deaf or hearing responses. Rather than being about personal identity, this survey distinguishes differing audiological statuses by using the categories of hearing, deaf, hard of hearing, and late-deafened. For most people from deaf families, neither audiological status nor identity are simple binary constructs with deaf and hearing in opposition to each other; one may also be hard of hearing or late-deafened and may identify as deaf, Coda, or hearing. This study shows that capturing accurate demographic data requires separating out audiological status from cultural identity. If the profession is to move toward looking at language and cultural competencies separate from audiological status then this study confirms that providing more nuanced options for individuals to identify with is helpful in understanding the individuals who are providing interpreting services.

It is possible that the 6.92% of respondents who reported having no college education and no degree are either from the younger group who are working toward attaining higher education or they may be in the older age group where opportunities or requirements for higher education were not an issue when they entered the profession. In general, the data indicates that deaf-parented interpreters either are college-degreed or value education enough to engage in some sort of post secondary education.

To see if there were any patterns between gender and birth order in the likelihood of a deaf-parented individual becoming an interpreter, the current survey unsuccessfully attempted to solicit enough data to support or refute Singleton and Tittle's claim (2000). Singleton and Tittle (2000) reported that the eldest female in a family is more likely to function as the family interpreter as compared to other children in the family. Napier (in press) found that 44% of the female respondents in a survey of child language brokering reported being eldest in the family.

The findings in this survey are insufficient in determining if the eldest female in a family is most likely to become an interpreter because it does not account for female respondents who report being a middle or younger child, but who may have older brothers making them the eldest female. This survey does show that about half (50.37%) of the respondents, regardless of gender, report being eldest in the family and about half of the females (49.41%) report being either eldest or only children. These results do not support the idea that the eldest female in the family becomes an interpreter but neither does it disprove that the eldest female in the family typically functions as the family interpreter. These are two different, though possibly related, questions.

Among spoken language heritage language users, Gollan, Starr, and Ferreira (2014) found that the number and variety of heritage language speakers present during childhood seemed to have a more positive affect on heritage language acquisition and fluency than frequency of heritage language use. If this is true for signed language heritage language users, then growing up among a rich and varied signed language community could be a contributing factor to a hearing child of deaf parents acquiring



fluency in the signed language. Having a signing deaf parent may not be sufficient heritage language exposure to ensure heritage language/signed language proficiency.

In addition to the language exposure available to deaf-parented children in a larger deaf community, support networks (both formal and informal) for the parents may be more available among a community that is familiar with and used to serving deaf individuals. In that way, larger deaf communities create a different upbringing experience for deaf-parented families as opposed to isolated communities. The large number of respondents (75.7%) that reported growing up within 60 miles of a residential school for the deaf and/or a large deaf community begs further analysis. The scope of this study does not include an analysis of whether this percentage carries over to the larger deaf community to see if deaf people choose to situate themselves within larger deaf communities at this same rate or if there is a correlation between deaf-parented interpreters entering the field of ASL/English interpreting and being raised in this environment.

Napier (in press) found that participants in the CLB study still broker for their deaf parents as adults. While this study of deaf-parented interpreters did not ask outright if the respondent brokered for their deaf parent, the question about current proximity to the respondent's deaf parent along with a question further in the survey that asks if the respondent currently brokers could be cross-tabulated to determine the likelihood that adult children are occupying an interpreter role within the larger community for their deaf parents. This survey found that almost half (49.67%) of the respondents currently live within 60 miles of their deaf parent and nearly all (92.4%) respondents currently broker for family and friends.

### **Respondents' professional status**

The spike in entry to the profession at the age of 18 is likely due to high school graduation and entry into the labor market around the age of 18. With the finding that respondents are largely college-educated and the finding that 49.8% of deaf-parented interpreters are entering the field between the ages of 17 and 22, the assumption can be made that respondents were already working as an interpreter before or while attaining post secondary education. As the profession moves towards requiring credentialing and licensing of interpreters before they are able to enter the field, this pattern of age of entry into the profession will shift. What this means for deaf-parented interpreters' entry to the field of ASL/English interpreting remains to be seen, since the degree requirement for credentialing is fairly recent. Based on the data, we can predict that this group will either be denied entry, delay entry, or choose a different career path.

The discrepancy found between certification rates of currently working and formerly working interpreters is explained by looking at the bilateral distribution of responses regarding the number of years worked as an interpreter. Respondents who are no longer working as an interpreter largely fall into one of two categories, working less than 5 years and more than 26 years. These two groups represent individuals who have decided to leave the field after working for a short time prior to obtaining certification, or who have retired after working as an interpreter for many years, and no longer need to hold or maintain certification. Both groups are part of a natural attrition process for any professional field.

Understanding the patterns around deaf-parented interpreters attaining certification involves analyzing a few different responses to the survey questions in this study. Of the total respondents, 86.7% hold a nationally recognized interpreting credential and 44.03% of the total respondents achieved a certification within the first 5 years of working as a professional. On the surface, this finding seems to indicate that deaf-parented interpreters are achieving professional status at a satisfactory rate; however, the education and credentialing requirements have changed drastically in recent years. The respondents to this survey represent the life span of RID and they hold certifications ranging from the first certifications offered, the Comprehensive Skills Certificate (CSC), to the most recent National Interpreter Certification (NIC), each of which have different requirements. The requirements have also become more stringent over time. With deaf-parented interpreters historically entering the profession at such young ages, many doing so before achieving a post-secondary degree, the question arises if the current degree requirement serve as a deterrent or gatekeeper to deaf-parented interpreters entering the field.

Individuals who are currently working, but for less than 5 years and do not yet have certification, may be working toward the degree requirement imposed by RID prior to sitting for a certification exam. Alternatively, they may not yet have the skills that the RID certification exam is assessing.

Of the respondents who have failed a credential test (n=14), five of them mentioned the difficulty of gaining a credential in the Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada (AVLIC) system, four specified their inability to pass the written portion of the RID credential, and two specified an inability to pass the interview portion

of the RID credential. The remaining three respondents in this category were not specific about a particular credential or section of the credentialing process.

The written and interview portions of the RID test are often topics that are well covered within interpreter education programs (CCIE, 2010). It is possible that without attending an IEP, the lack of knowledge of these portions of the exam may feed into the fear that was cited by nine (7.2%) of the 125 respondents. The fear may then feed into responses of no time or money (12%) and feeling disenfranchised (14.4%) as ways to mitigate the fear of taking the credential exam. There may be a cause and effect relationship found between some of the categories. For example, not having the time or money to get certified is a rational reason in a situation where one is not required to hold a nationally recognized credential to maintain employment.

### **Respondents' language profile**

A majority of the respondents (57.9%) report that ASL is their first language. This finding correlates with the Napier (in press) finding that 57% of the respondents to the child language brokering survey reported that their home sign language was their first language. Napier (in press) notes that this finding is incongruent with spoken language heritage language users. In the case of spoken language heritage language users, 100% report that the language of their home, their parent's language, was their first language. A slightly larger percentage of respondents in this study (36.4%) described themselves as balanced bilinguals, having acquired both a signed and spoken language simultaneously, similar to the Napier (in press) study (21%). While Napier's study was not a study of interpreters, 78% of the respondents in that study reported working as an interpreter.

When looking more closely at what is reported as the first language of the deaf-parented interpreter respondents, it is found that 4.1% of the respondent report a spoken language as their first language with the remaining 95.9% reporting at least one signed language as a first language.

Drawing comparisons with spoken language heritage users and with studies of child language brokers helps to frame the deaf-parented interpreter as a circumstantial bilingual. Napier (in press) asked respondents in her child language brokering survey to rate their language skill on a five point Likert scale (1=poor, 2=reasonable, 3=competent, 4=fluent, 5=extremely fluent) and found that respondents reported a high level of fluency in both languages with a marginally higher level in their signed language, with overall mean scores of 4.4975 in sign language and 4.4825 in spoken/written language.

Respondents in this study of deaf-parented interpreters reported a pattern similar to that found in Napier's study, even though the question forms were different and the scale was different. On a six-point scale, respondents reported a mean score of 4.74 for English and 5.83 for ASL, a spread of 1.09 points. Higher self-reported skills were reported in the signed, heritage language in both studies.

When asked about particular language skills, Napier (in press) found that respondents in the child language brokering study self-reported 'understanding fingerspelling' as the lowest language competency category with a mean score of 4.42 out of 5. This study of deaf-parented interpreters found that while fingerspelling was one of the most often cited areas of desired skill development, findings indicate that the skill category of fingerspelling can be broken down into expressive and receptive skills as well as understanding that the skill itself is a representation of the spoken/written language

and therefore overlaps with skill in the spoken/written language. As the only other study of deaf-parented interpreters, making comparisons to the findings of Napier (in press) where appropriate is helpful in understanding the findings of this study. This study of deaf-parented interpreters' finding that needing improvement in vocabulary is the most often cited skill area in both English and ASL, may be because working as an interpreter requires that the practitioner hold a large vocabulary for a variety of topics. For the signed language, the vocabulary needs for work are likely very different than the language used in the home, where the deaf-parented interpreter acquired their signed language.

According to feedback received directly via email and personal conversation, forcing respondents to choose either ASL or English as a preferred language proved to be the most problematic of all the survey questions. Individuals reported that they took issue with being forced to choose a language when they felt that the researcher, a Coda, should have known that choosing one language would be very difficult. These Codas indicated that language preference always depended on the situation and with whom communication was happening. Several people reported that they did not complete the survey after this question because they were frustrated by the nature of the question itself.

### **Parent characteristics**

Allowing respondents to identify the parental relationship and identity of each parent allows for analysis of what parental characteristics may lead to one parent being identified as the #1 parent and the other as the #2 parent. The finding that the #1 parent was most often the mother and #2 parent was most often the father may reflect who the

main caregiver in the family was as opposed to who might be viewed as head of household. Further analysis of parental characteristics, such as education level or language use, that may influence a respondent choosing one parent over another were not within the scope of this study.

### **Parents' language profile**

Among spoken language communities, children perform child language brokering because their parents are not competent in the majority language of their community (Baker, 2006). The lack of competence is usually due to the parents' presence as an immigrant in a new country. This is not the case for child language brokers from deaf families. Deaf individuals are likely to have been born in the country where they live, are bilingual, and have varying levels of competency in the majority language of the community.

The parent's competency in the majority language is influenced by factors such as access to the language, either through auditory means if they have any hearing, or visual means. Written language cannot be acquired naturally and some instruction must be provided. That instruction can only happen if the child has a language to build on. The parent's competency in the signed language is influenced by factors such as the age the parent was exposed to a signed language, whether sign language was used in the home and/or school during childhood, whether they have another language to build on, as well as their access to a variety of rich and varied sign language users.

While the scope of this study does not include an examination of socioeconomic status and its effect on higher education outcomes, a significant portion (79.1%) of the

deaf parents did not attend college or did attend but did not complete a degree. Of the deaf-parented respondents, 36.75% did not attend college or did attend but did not complete a degree. Further analysis of these findings may lead to similar matriculation patterns in post-secondary education that is found among other first-generation college student populations; however, caution should be applied when making comparisons to non-deaf populations. Language competency and access has a direct influence on whether an individual is able to be successful in school. The field of education for deaf children is rife with conflicting ideologies that often result in language deprivation. Without a solid language base, such as a signed language for a deaf child at a young age, they can suffer from life-long issues both cognitively and emotionally (Gulati, 2014). The factors that contribute to the high rate of respondents' parents not attending college are different than other populations whose children are considered first-generation college students, though the outcome may be the same.

Napier (in press) collected language profile information from respondents in an unprecedented child language brokering study of deaf-parented child language brokers and found that “deaf parents (as with immigrant parents) may have limited ability to communicate directly in the majority language of their country, which subsequently may place Cudas in a position to perform CLB duties” (in press, no page number). Napier (in press) used a Likert scale to assess respondents' parents' competence in their signed and spoken/written language. As in Napier's work, this survey of deaf-parented interpreters collects data on parents' language competencies in signed and spoken/written languages. Respondents were asked to report their own language skills in English and ASL on a Likert scale. Respondents used the same scale to also report their parents' language skills



in English and ASL. The mean scores of both ASL and English ability have a 1.31 point difference indicating that deaf-parented interpreters report their parents having stronger language skills in ASL (5.71) than in English (4.40).

In the case of the study's respondents reporting a lack of fluency by their parent in English, the majority language, can lead to a heavier reliance of the parent on their bilingual children to function as child language brokers. Intelligible speech may also be an influencing factor on how a deaf parent communicates within the family or with non-signing individuals. It also can determine whether—or how much—the child brokers for the deaf parent (Napier, in press; Pizer, 2012). Respondents reported that their parents had less skill in English than ASL and that their voice/speech was either sometimes or never intelligible to non-signers. This combination of language profiles of the deaf parent could mean that the deaf-parented interpreter experienced more child language brokering than deaf-parented individuals whose parents were more balanced bilinguals and/or had intelligible speech.

### **Early linguistic environment**

Pizer (2007) and Pizer, Walters and Meier (2012) have examined the language choice within deaf-parented families and have found that there are varying ways that families negotiate using spoken and/or signed languages. The bimodal nature of the languages allows for code blending, and some families choose to speak and sign at the same time. Code blending is a way of communication that is unique to signed/spoken language bilinguals and is not found among unimodal, spoken heritage language users.

Language decisions made in the home may lead to varying language competencies among the heritage language using children in signed language using families.

In general, respondents' early linguistic environment includes frequent exposure to a variety of signed language users as well as encouragement to use a signed language at home. Quite a few respondents noted that while they did not ever live with their grandparents, they did live in the same town and even on the same street. With most deaf people being born to people who hear and do not sign, it is possible that hearing grandparents may have a large part in the upbringing of deaf-parented children and as a result would influence language acquisition of those children. Additionally, unlike spoken language heritage language users where the grandparents also speak the heritage language, deaf-parented children may also child language broker within the family (Napier, in press).

Qualitative information about the interactions is not captured in this data; however, these responses show that deaf-parented individuals have opportunities to use signed language with other signed language users who are not their parents, in a variety of settings. That variety may support the Gollan et al (2014) claim that heritage language proficiency is more dependent on number of heritage language speakers as opposed to the amount of time spent using the heritage language.

### **Interpreting and Interpreter training**

Napier (in press) found that 78% (214) of the respondents to her child language brokering survey work as a professional interpreter and of those, 53% (113) say that they fell into interpreting by accident. Similarly, this study of deaf-parented interpreters found

that 79.8% of the respondents fell into interpreting. This path of entry is not one that would be available to someone who was not already fluent in signed language or connected with the deaf and/or interpreting community. Respondents that ‘fell into interpreting’ report entering the field unintentionally, usually through being asked by deaf friends or other interpreters to cover an interpreting need in the community.

With 34.8% of the respondents reporting that they have a sibling who either now or has in the past worked as an interpreter, and 34.9% of the respondents reporting that their parents suggested or encouraged them to become an interpreter, there may be some familial support to enter and stay within the profession, even if unintentionally.

This study does not cross-tabulate age of respondent or number of years working as an interpreter with whether the respondent fell into interpreting or pursued it. It is possible that the younger or newer interpreters are pursuing ASL/English interpreting as a career choice now that there are more opportunities for interpreter education. Another factor that may influence this potential shift is the education requirement to hold a degree before sitting for the RID NIC or CDI exams, along with increasing state licensure. The ability to simply fall into the career of interpreting may be a thing of the past.

Deaf-parented interpreter education and onramp experiences can be looked at several ways and includes understanding the experiences of the 61% of the respondents who did not attend a formal interpreter education program, the 28.5% of respondents who attended and completed a formal interpreter education program, and the 10.5% of respondents who attended but did not complete a formal interpreter education program.

A common theme among all reported induction routes was the need to fill in gaps in knowledge. Respondents sought to fill those gaps in varying ways including formally

structured programs, picking and choosing courses, attending workshops, and seeking out both formal and informal mentoring relationships. Of the respondents that attended an IEP, 58.4% reported being exempt from courses such as ASL, fingerspelling, and deaf culture. Of interest in this finding is that respondents also stated that they found courses on ASL and deaf culture most helpful and vocabulary was mentioned as the ASL skill that respondents most wanted to improve. Other conflicting responses were made around stating that fingerspelling courses and workshops were least helpful but respondents reported that fingerspelling was a skill area that they wanted to improve.

When looking at reported language skills that deaf-parented interpreters want to improve, along with analyzing the courses and workshops that were most and least helpful, it becomes quite clear that deaf-parented interpreters believe they can benefit from the same instruction that L2 users of the signed language are receiving in interpreter education; however, the current pedagogical framework does not meet the specific needs of the heritage language user.

When respondents who actually completed IEPs were asked how well the IEPs met their needs, most replied good, or very well. However, this data is skewed toward individuals that actually completed the program. Respondents who did not complete or even attempt an IEP were not routed to the question asking if the program met their needs. Interestingly, 27.7% of the respondents that completed the IEP stated that the program met their needs terribly. Yet they stuck with their education and completed the program.

CCIE Standards assume language and cultural literacy in ASL and English before entering the IEP. Carter (2015) and Godfrey (2011) found that this is not the case in

practice because so few interpreter education programs use standardized admissions criteria, such as is required in the CCIE accreditation process. If all students are admitted into an interpreter education program on a more even playing field at the start of the IEP, ensuring ASL and English language fluency as well as cultural competency, then the experience of deaf-parented interpreters within the program may not need any special accommodation.

West Oyedele (2015) conducted a survey of African American/black signed language interpreters in the United States to investigate cultural competence within the interpreting field as well as the persistence of African American/black interpreters. West Oyedele examined the relationship between the presence of African American/black faculty or classmates in IEPs and the participants' persistence in matriculating through the program. Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain (2007) define critical mass as the level of representation of a particular minority group of people in an educational environment that leads to comfort and familiarity for the student and in turn promotes retention and persistence for the minority student. They found that more Latino faculty were represented on campus there was also an increase in the success and aspirations of Latino students on campus. When West Oyedele asked participants in her study about the number of African American/black educators, guest presenters, or mentors and classmates they were exposed to during their interpreter training, she found that 85% of the respondents were in classrooms with three or fewer African American/black classmates and a majority had no educators (76%), guest presenters (57%), or mentors (72%) who were African American/black. West Oyedele contends that these numbers

suggest a lack of critical mass for African American/black interpreters who are matriculating through IEPs.

The question of what constitutes a critical mass for deaf-parented interpreters in interpreter education programs is a difficult one. Furthermore, deaf-parented interpreters who have never experienced an education alongside other deaf-parented individuals may not know how helpful it may be to have a stronger deaf-parented presence in their education. Nevertheless, this survey asked those questions and, while there are factors not accounted for in this cross-tabulation that may influence program satisfaction or dissatisfaction, there is a correlation between having deaf-parented instructors in the program and general overall satisfaction with the program.

### **Work environments**

The NCIEC needs assessment survey results show that that 47% of its deaf-parented respondents (n=99) had full- or part-time staff positions in K-12 educational settings (22%), video interpreting services (20%), post-secondary settings (19%), with the remaining respondents in other areas. Of the non-deaf-parented respondents to the NCIEC needs assessment survey (n=1,673), 51% reported holding full- or part-time staff interpreter positions in K-12 settings (39%), post-secondary settings (19%), video interpreting services (13%), with the remaining respondents in other areas.

Respondents to this deaf-parented interpreter survey report similar work environments except at higher rates in video interpreting services and pre-K-12. When comparing respondents who used to work as an interpreter to those currently working as an interpreter there is a marked difference between the most common settings for those

who hold either a full or part-time position. Respondents who used to work as an interpreter most commonly reported working in pre-K-12 settings (33.3%) and those who currently work as an interpreter most commonly reported working in video relay service settings (32.8%).

## Chapter 6

### CONCLUSION

The findings of this mixed-methods exploratory study of deaf-parented interpreters who identify as deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, or Coda and who now work or have ever worked as an interpreter show that deaf-parented interpreters may demographically look very similar to the larger population of ASL/English interpreters. However, the currently available routes of induction to the profession do not account for the deaf-parented individual's heritage language use of ASL or their child language brokering experience. The early linguistic environment of the deaf-parented interpreter often includes varied experiences in both ASL and English, beginning at a very young age, that lead to different patterns of language acquisition when compared with non-native users of ASL. This difference is not taken into consideration in interpreter education programs.

Deaf-parented interpreters are seeking out education and training opportunities in a variety of ways, including attending formalized interpreter education programs either piecemeal or in their entirety, formal and informal mentorships, and short-term workshops. Deaf-parented individuals in the field are also attaining nationally recognized credentials and are maintaining employment as interpreters. This study shows that deaf-parented interpreters have been working as interpreters before or while simultaneously attaining education or credentials. The increased need for educational degrees and credentialing before one is allowed to work as an interpreter in the United States is a concern; many states are pushing to implement interpreter licensure, and RID requires



candidates to obtain degrees before entering the field of ASL/English interpreting. The impact on deaf-parented interpreters remains to be seen but without doubt will curtail what has been the common practice of entering the profession through community induction routes and attaining credentials while already working. With the understanding that most deaf-parented interpreters have not intentionally pursued ASL/English interpreting as a career, these more formal induction routes of education, certification, and licensing will result in less deaf-parented interpreters entering the field.

Honoring, refining, and honing the skills that the deaf-parented, heritage signed language user brings to the classroom means the interpreter education and training should meet the student where they are: as bilinguals of varying fluency with child language brokering experience. A better-matched education will be more satisfying and give them a better chance at matriculating through an educational program. This will result in more deaf-parented interpreters entering the profession who are ready to work with professionalism and the appropriate mix of experience and skill.

### **Recommendations and areas of further study**

The results of this research benefit the field of signed and spoken language interpreting by providing areas of focus for curriculum design and teaching approaches that meet the needs of deaf-parented interpreters and others who have signed language as their first language, or acquired it as a second language at an early age. A better understanding of the deaf-parented interpreter population requires, at minimum, knowing how many interpreters and interpreting students are deaf-parented. By adding a demographic category of deaf-parented individuals to applications, membership forms

and exit surveys, this information can be captured. A tracking of trends in acceptance and completion rates of students and certification of interpreters can occur once a baseline population is established.

A significant concern with the findings of this study lies with the lack of representation for deaf-parented interpreters of color. An interpreter population in which 87.1% identify as white does not serve the needs of a racially diverse deaf community that prefers interpreters that mirror their race and culture (West Oyedele, 2015). In her seminal study of African American/black interpreters, West Oyedele (2015) found that 8% (n=10) of the participants identified as Coda interpreters. Further study to understand the barriers to becoming a professional interpreter among deaf-parented interpreters of color as a subset of the population would help to inform strategies in overcoming those barriers, ultimately leading to greater representation of deaf-parented interpreters in the profession.

To help heritage language students understand the varying language skills among themselves, teachers of the heritage language can educate themselves and their students about factors that influence language acquisition; these include topics such as frequency and diversity of language users, as well as the impact of varying language immersion experiences in their home, community, and school environments. An instructor who is educated in understanding L1 and L2 acquisition patterns within the signed language using community can then become a better instructor of both the language and interpreting. Likewise, a student who understands language acquisition patterns within their signed language using community can be a better student of the signed language and ultimately can be a better interpreter in that language. Understanding, acknowledging,

and accepting the language variation found among deaf-parented heritage language students can help to ameliorate the attitudes and resistance found by McDermid (2008). It will also help to establish more understanding between IEP classmates who are and are not heritage users of the signed language by creating a framework to talk about language variation. Having this framework would establish language learning as a process that is unique for everyone depending on his or her communities of immersion.

Universities should consider developing and providing specific classes for heritage signed language users that address the language learning needs of individuals with varying levels of fluency in their heritage language. Heritage language learner courses are being offered throughout the United States in higher education but also in community classes in spoken languages such as Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, and Swahili (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2015). These programs can serve as guides and references for the development of ASL heritage language courses. Educating heritage learners of ASL in such a setting will provide an opportunity for them to refine their fluency and explore their cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a space with others like themselves. Just as should happen with second-language users of a signed language, once a solid language fluency base is established, the learning of interpreting theory, ethics, and processing models can be provided to both first- and second-language users of the signed language together.

More and more deaf people are becoming interpreters, and are also seeking interpreter education that meets their needs in a way that is different than the interpreter who is a hearing second-language learner of signed language (Forestal 2011). With some similarities in background that deaf interpreters and Cudas bring to the field, such as

language brokering and circumstantial bilingualism (Angelelli, 2010), interpreter education could look to combine students who are deaf, deaf of deaf, and/or Coda in courses specific to their needs. A further look at how standards of language and cultural literacy are enforced at IEP entry-points is necessary. Interpreter education programs should move toward acquiring CCIE Accreditation to ensure standardized interpreter education for everyone regardless of language background. Accreditation from CCIE requires programs to establish signed language fluency standards prior to accepting students into the IEP (Carter, 2015; CCIE, 2010). Without this established standard, interpreter education remains wildly variable.

Establishing a higher education requirement for interpreters prior to sitting for a test implies that in order to achieve the credential, one must be formally schooled in the topic and skill the credential is evaluating. Conversely, an introduction to interpreting and working in the deaf community can occur through alternate career paths such as teaching, counseling, or deaf studies. Certification as an interpreter with the RID currently requires a degree, but that degree does not have to be in interpreting (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2011).

Godfrey (2010) found that 60.6% (n=33) of the interpreter education programs participating in her study reported not being capable of graduating credential-ready graduates, meaning that even with the required schooling, an IEP graduate may not be able to meet what the Registry of Interpreters for Deaf deems as the minimum qualification to do the work of an ASL/English interpreter. The dismally low pass rate for RID certifications, both NIC and CDI, beg the larger question from the deaf and interpreter community regarding what skills are necessary to be a proficient ASL/English

interpreter. Further study should encompass an understanding of what IEPs are teaching, how they are teaching it, and what the RID credential is actually assessing. The low pass rate indicates that there is disconnect between current educational practices and what the credential is assessing. A study of whether traditional community induction practices or formal IEP completion yield different results among candidates for RID certification would further inform what may be the more appropriate induction practice for ASL/English interpreters, or which components of each result in a successfully credentialed practitioner.

This study of deaf-parented interpreters shows that individuals who “fell into” interpreting without attaining formal interpreter education have historically been able to obtain a nationally recognized interpreting credential. If the credential’s purpose is to ensure minimum competency to do professional work, then a post-secondary degree requirement serves as a gatekeeping mechanism. This will prevent individuals who can do the work and meet the skills qualifications assessed by national certification from entering the field. Alternative paths to formalized interpreter education and into the field of ASL/English interpreting, such as apprenticeships, need to be explored to provide heritage language users an encouraging and supportive onramp experience as they transition from child language broker to professional interpreter. Such practices may ensure that deaf-parented interpreters enter and remain in the field.

Deaf-parented interpreters without credentials are being employed by agencies and Video Relay Service companies to fill the growing need for interpreters within that setting. This study has shown that full-time employment can sometimes also be a logistical barrier to someone facing the requirement to complete a post-secondary degree

as a prerequisite to earning credentials. Without the post-secondary degree, an interpreter may never attain a nationally recognized credential. In an increasing number of states, that means they also may not receive licensure. By not providing adequate interpreter training options for these deaf-parented individuals, yet keeping them employed, the industry has created labor conditions where heritage ASL users are significantly set apart and treated differently than interpreters who are formally educated, degreed, and credentialed. This dichotomy can lead to further attitudinal barriers that do not move the profession forward and may ultimately drive deaf-parented interpreters into other professions. The burden to educate these deaf-parented interpreters who have entered the field through traditional community routes may fall onto the employer. For this demographic the employer is typically the video relay service companies. The educational opportunities that are housed within these settings need to also include knowledge of heritage language learner practices while being mindful of the child language brokering experiences these individuals bring into the work place.

Interpreter education programs should strive to provide a critical mass of deaf-parented students, instructors, mentors, and guest speakers. Receiving an education in a setting with exposure to other deaf-parented students and professionals can serve to ensure matriculation and retention through the program ensuring a stronger educational experience for all students. Critical mass can be achieved by creating heritage language learner classes that will then draw deaf-parented students into the post-secondary setting. Formal and informal mentoring should also be in practice to guide deaf-parented interpreters into post-secondary educational settings as instructors, mentors, and guest speakers. Employing a heritage language learner framework to the entire program of

language learning and interpreting/translation will create an environment that is appealing and attractive to deaf-parented interpreters where they are likely to feel that their unique needs as a learner are being met.

The overwhelming enthusiastic participation for this study shows that deaf-parented interpreters are anxious to share their experiences and be active participants in creating change within the ASL/English interpreting field. A response rate of 67.71% to the call for deaf-parented interpreters to participate in further study after this exploratory survey show that participants are eager for a change to the status quo of ASL/English interpreter education. In addition to this response rate, the researcher was contacted by email directly by many more who were interested in being involved further but were not available on the particular date and time indicated in the initial call for further study. These deaf-parented interpreters have experiences that are worthy of the field's time and attention.

Further study is suggested to drill down on potential patterns found among deaf/deaf, deaf/hearing, and deaf/coda parented families. In particular, language practice and ideology in the home may vary depending on language use of the parents and if there are other deaf family members (i.e. siblings) in the home (Pizer, 2013). Child language brokering may be more likely to happen in families where the parent is not as fluent in the majority language of the community. If educational level is an accurate measure of fluency in the majority language (in this case, English), then it is likely that parents who did not complete high school may be less competent in English and therefore their children may be more likely to and more often function as child language brokers. Socio-economic status within the deaf community can not be measured by the same standards

as is seen in the non-deaf community; however, making comparisons to the larger community can be of benefit in understanding deaf-parented students.

Through focus groups and in-depth interviews with deaf-parented interpreters, we can better understand the motivations, perseverance, language ideology, ethical considerations, fear around attaining credentialing and education, discrepancies between anecdotal descriptions of interpreter education programs as unsatisfactory and respondents reporting that their programs met their needs very well, and the impact of various early linguistic environments. Understanding the deaf-parented interpreter better can translate to a stronger and more skilled professional who has been provided a rigorous educational option which accommodates all students regardless of how they acquired their signed language, and by extension, a stronger and better interpreting community.

By looking at spoken language communities that rely on interpreters to access the majority language, research has shown that language minorities prefer in-group interpreters and translators as opposed to community outsiders. A similar preference for in-group interpreters has been found among deaf African-American/Black consumers of interpreting services (West Oyedele, 2015). Anecdotally, deaf consumers of interpreting services have stated that deaf-parented are preferred over non-deaf parented interpreters. Focus groups and in-depth interviews with deaf consumers of interpreting services are recommended as next steps to better understand the view of deaf-parented interpreters from their point of view. The scope of this study is limited to exploring the experience of the deaf-parented interpreters from their own point of view. A 360-degree view of deaf-parented interpreters formed by collecting data from deaf consumers, interpreting



colleagues, and interpreter educators would help to round out the deaf-parented interpreter's experience.

This exploratory study of deaf-parented interpreters creates a better picture of who they are, their early linguistic environment, and their induction experiences into the profession of ASL/English interpreting. As native, heritage language users of American Sign Language with child language brokering experiences, deaf-parented interpreters bring in-group knowledge and experiences of the deaf community. This experience and knowledge is lacking in second language users of ASL who often learn the language and learn about the deaf community through formal educational channels. Without a focused push to ensure that deaf-parented interpreters have supportive and appropriate induction practices, the field of ASL/English interpreting stands to lose out on potential deaf-parented interpreters that bring valuable knowledge and experiences to the profession.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Deaf-parented interpreter survey

7/27/2014

Deaf-parented Interpreter Survey - Google Forms

#### Deaf-parented Interpreter Survey

Project background, Introduction to the study, & Consent

See ASL Introductory video below.

##### About the Researcher

I am Amy Williamson, the daughter of deaf parents, Mary Ella Scarboro Williamson and Barney Williamson of North Carolina. I have worked as an ASL/English interpreter since 1990 and I am conducting this research as partial fulfillment for a Masters degree in Interpreting Studies at Western Oregon University under the supervision of Pamela Cancel.

##### Aims of this study

The target group of this study is deaf-parented interpreters who identify as either Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, or Coda.

##### The aim of this study is

1. To collect demographic data on American Sign Language/English interpreters who have one or more deaf parent.
2. To capture the induction experiences of deaf-parented interpreters into the profession of signed language interpretation.
3. To capture what the early linguistic environments were for deaf-parented interpreters.
4. To make recommendations for the interpreter training and education of deaf-parented interpreters.

I hope you will participate in this questionnaire in order to contribute to our understanding of the training and educational experiences of deaf parented interpreters which may, in turn, improve the quality of interpreters working with our family members and the Deaf community as a whole.

##### Time commitment

This questionnaire is estimated to take no more than 25 minutes and will be collecting responses until August 30th, 2014.

##### Who can participate

If you meet each of these criteria, please consider participating:

- One or more deaf parent and used signed language in the home while growing up
- You identify as Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, &/or Coda
- You work as an ASL/English interpreter now OR have ever worked as an ASL/English interpreter
- You are at least 18 years old

##### Further phases of this study

At the end of this questionnaire, you will be asked if you would like to participate in further studies related to this project, such as focus groups or interviews. If you choose to participate in further study, your name and contact information will be collected and held in confidence under password protection.

##### Confidentiality

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. Your responses up until the point of withdrawal will not be included in the study. All responses will be anonymous. If you choose to participate in further study, be assured that your name and contact information will not be tied to your questionnaire responses. Only the researcher will know who has volunteered for participation in further study and all names and contact information will be held in confidence under password protection.

##### Sharing of study results & findings

No individual will be identified in any publication of the results, although some anonymised quotes or transcribed examples of comments may be used when sharing the research findings from this study. Participation in this phase of the study is anonymous.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SmE6bmhAmWSe8zELYk76UVXi0KIGTciBFsRjHeuks/edit>

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Findings will be shared through workshops, presentations, and publications. The findings will be available to participants through a published Master's thesis or by contacting the researcher, Amy Williamson at [awilliamson13@wou.edu](mailto:awilliamson13@wou.edu), directly.

#### Consent

Participation in this questionnaire will serve as your consent.

#### Questions or further information

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Amy Williamson at [awilliamson13@wou.edu](mailto:awilliamson13@wou.edu) or Thesis Committee Chair, Pamela Cancel at [cancelp@wou.edu](mailto:cancelp@wou.edu).

The Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board has approved the ethical aspects of this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or [irb@wou.edu](mailto:irb@wou.edu).

Following this link to the questionnaire implies your consent to participate in this study. This survey should take no more than 25 minutes.

Thank you for your participation!

\* Required



<http://youtube.com/watch?v=0dTLQlmr2iM>

**1. Are you now or have you ever in the past worked as a professional American Sign Language/English interpreter? \***

This question is asking about professional interpreting for non-family members or for money or some other compensation.

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ No      Stop filling out this form.
- ☐ Yes-my interpreting career was something I pursued      Skip to question 2.
- ☐ Yes-my interpreting career was something I fell into because of my experience with deaf parent(s)      Skip to question 2.

**2. Do you have one or more Deaf parent(s)? \***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No      Stop filling out this form.

## Who are we?

**3. What is your gender identity? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans
- ☐ Other: .....

**4. What is your age range? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ over 66

**5. What is your race/ethnic background? \****check all that apply**Check all that apply.*

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Latino/a
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian/South Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other: .....

**6. Do you identify as LGBTQ? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

**7. What is your audiological status? \***

All participants in this survey are deaf-parented. This question is not about identity. This question is about audiological status.

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Deaf
- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ Hard of hearing
- ☐ Late deafened

**8. What levels of education have you achieved? \***

choose all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ No college, no degree
- ☐ Some college, no degree
- ☐ Associates
- ☐ Bachelors
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Did you grow up within 60 miles of a residential school for the deaf &/or a large deaf community? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Do you currently live within 60 miles of your deaf parent(s)? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Do you have a sibling that is/has worked as a professional Signed Language/English interpreter? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. In your immediate family, who are the Deaf family members that use signed language? \*  
e.g. no other, mother, step-father, grandmother, sister, cousin, aunt, daughter, husband

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13. Where do you fall in the sibling birth order of your family? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ oldest  
☐ middle  
☐ youngest  
☐ only

14. How many brothers do you have? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0  
☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3  
☐ 4 or more

15. What are their ages and audiological statuses?

e.g. 45 hearing , no brothers

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16. How many sisters do you have? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0  
☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3  
☐ 4 or more



**17. What are their ages and audiological statuses?**

e.g. 45 hearing , no sisters

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**18. What do you consider your first language? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ ASL
- ☐ English
- ☐ Both ASL & English
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**19. Of these choices, which language do you prefer to use? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ ASL
- ☐ English

**20. How do you rate your current overall language ability in ASL? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1 does not understand and can not sign
- ☐ 2 understand but can not sign
- ☐ 3 understand and can sign with great difficulty
- ☐ 4 understand and sign with difficulty
- ☐ 5 understand and sign comfortably, with little difficulty
- ☐ 6 understand and sign fluently like a native user

**21. What aspect of your ASL language skills would you like to improve? \***


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**22. How do you rate your current overall language ability in ENGLISH? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1 does not understand and can not read/write
- ☐ 2 understand but can not read/write
- ☐ 3 understand and can write with great difficulty
- ☐ 4 understand and read/write with difficulty
- ☐ 5 understand and read/write comfortably, with little difficulty
- ☐ 6 understand and read fluently like a native user

**23. What aspect of your ENGLISH language skills would you like to improve? \***

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**Parent #1**

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Parent #1 is the main parent figure that lived in your home and had a significant role in your upbringing.

**24. What relationship does parent #1 have to you? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Step Mother
- ☐ Step Father
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**25. Your parent #1 is which of these? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Deaf of Deaf
- ☐ Deaf
- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ Coda
- ☐ Hard of Hearing (identifies as Deaf)
- ☐ Hard of Hearing (identifies as hearing)
- ☐ Late Deafened (identifies as Deaf)
- ☐ Late Deafened (identifies as hearing)
- ☐ Deaf-Blind

**26. At what age did your parent #1 learn to sign? \***

the age of puberty is different for everyone, if you do not know, please make an educated guess

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ never, they do not sign
- ☐ before the age of 5
- ☐ between the ages of 5-puberty
- ☐ after puberty
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**27. What ages (could be more than one answer) did your parent #1 attend a school for the deaf where signed language was used? \***

Check all that apply. e.g. If they attended a school for the deaf for 3rd grade-11th grade, you would check off "attended between the ages of 5-puberty" AND "attended after puberty"

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ my parent #1 is not deaf
- ☐ my parent #1 is deaf but did not attend a school for the deaf where signed language was used
- ☐ attended before the age of 5
- ☐ attended between the ages of 5-puberty
- ☐ attended after puberty
- ☐ I don't know if they attended or not
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**28. What is your parent #1's highest educational level? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Did not complete high school
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Associates
- ☐ Bachelors
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Some college but no degree
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**29. How do you rate your parent #1's overall language ability in ASL? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1 does not understand and can not sign
- ☐ 2 understand but can not sign
- ☐ 3 understand and can sign with great difficulty
- ☐ 4 understand and sign with difficulty
- ☐ 5 understand and sign comfortably, with little difficulty
- ☐ 6 understand and sign fluently like a native user

**30. How do you rate your parent #1's overall language ability in ENGLISH? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1 does not understand and can not read/write
- ☐ 2 understand but can not read/write
- ☐ 3 understand and can write with great difficulty
- ☐ 4 understand and read/write with difficulty
- ☐ 5 understand and read/write comfortably, with little difficulty
- ☐ 6 understand and read fluently like a native user

**31. Do other (non-signing) hearing people understand parent #1's voice/speech? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**32. How did your parent #1 communicate with you before you turned 5 years old? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**33. How did your parent #1 communicate with you when you were between the ages of 5 and puberty (whenever that was for you)? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent #2**

Parent #2 is a second parent figure that lived in your home while growing up and had a part in our upbringing.

**34. What relationship does parent #2 have to you? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Step Mother
- ☐ Step Father
- ☐ Parent #2 was not a part of my upbringing      *Skip to question 44.*
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent #2**

## 35. Your parent #2 is which of these? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Deaf of Deaf  
☐ Deaf  
☐ Hearing  
☐ Coda  
☐ Hard of Hearing (identifies as Deaf)  
☐ Hard of Hearing (identifies as hearing)  
☐ Late Deafened (identifies as Deaf)  
☐ Late Deafened (identifies as hearing)  
☐ Deaf-Blind

## 36. At what age did your parent #2 learn to sign? \*

the age of puberty is different for everyone, if you do not know, please make an educated guess

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ never, they do not sign  
☐ before the age of 5  
☐ between the ages of 5-puberty  
☐ after puberty  
☐ I don't know  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## 37. What ages (could be more than one answer) did your parent #2 attend a school for the deaf where signed language was used? \*

Check all that apply. e.g. If they attended a school for the deaf for 3rd grade-11th grade, you would check off "attended between the ages of 5-puberty" AND "attended after puberty"

Check all that apply.

- ☐ my parent #1 is not deaf  
☐ my parent #1 is deaf but did not attend a school for the deaf where signed language was used  
☐ attended before the age of 5  
☐ attended between the ages of 5-puberty  
☐ attended after puberty  
☐ I don't know if they attended or not  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**38. What is your parent #2's highest educational level? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Did not complete high school
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Associates
- ☐ Bachelors
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ Doctorate
- ☐ Some college but no degree
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**39. How do you rate your parent #2's overall language ability in ASL? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1 does not understand and can not sign
- ☐ 2 understand but can not sign
- ☐ 3 understand and can sign with great difficulty
- ☐ 4 understand and sign with difficulty
- ☐ 5 understand and sign comfortably, with little difficulty
- ☐ 6 understand and sign fluently like a native user

**40. How do you rate your parent #2's overall language ability in ENGLISH? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1 does not understand and can not read/write
- ☐ 2 understand but can not read/write
- ☐ 3 understand and can write with great difficulty
- ☐ 4 understand and read/write with difficulty
- ☐ 5 understand and read/write comfortably, with little difficulty
- ☐ 6 understand and read fluently like a native user

**41. Do other (non-signing) hearing people understand parent #2's voice/speech? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Never
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**42. How did your parent #2 communicate with you before you turned 5 years old? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**43. How did your parent #2 communicate with you when you were between the ages of 5 and puberty (whenever that was for you)? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Early Linguistic Environment****44. How did your parents communicate with each other while you were growing up? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**45. How did you and your siblings communicate with each other while you were growing up? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ I have no siblings
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**46. Did your grandparents live in your home at any point while you grew up? \***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**47. How did your grandparents communicate with you while you were growing up? \***

Choose all that apply.

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ I had no communication with my grandparents
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**48. Where were you cared for before you were 5 years old? \***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Daycare
- ☐ Home
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**49. How did your daycare providers communicate with you at home or daycare? \***

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Didn't go to daycare
- ☐ Speaking only
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**50. How often did you have contact with non-family, signing, Deaf community members before you were 5 years old? \***

e.g. Deaf club, church, friends

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Once every 2 weeks
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Every few months
- ☐ Not at all

**51. How often did you have contact with non-family, signing, Deaf community members between the ages of 6 and puberty? \***

Deaf club, church, friends

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Once every 2 weeks
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Every few months
- ☐ Not at all

**52. Did you play with other deaf-parented children? \***

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No      Skip to question 54.

**Early Linguistic Environment**

53. What language did you use when playing with other deaf-parented children? \*

Which of these was used MOST of the time?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Speaking
- ☐ Signing and speaking at the same time
- ☐ Signing or speaking but not at the same time
- ☐ English-like signing (no voice)
- ☐ ASL
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Early Linguistic Environment

54. Did your parents encourage you to use signed language as much as possible at home? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

55. Did your parent(s) correct your signing while you were growing up? \*

e.g. correct home signs

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

56. Did either of your parents suggest or encourage you to become an interpreter when you grew up? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No After the last question in this section, skip to question 58.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

57. What were the reasons, if any, they gave for suggesting or encouraging you to become an interpreter?

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## Interpreting and Interpreter Training

**58. Do you language broker now for family and friends? \***

What is language brokering? If you have interpreted between a Deaf person in your family that uses sign language and a hearing person who would not otherwise be able to communicate with that Deaf person, this means that you have acted as a 'language broker'. Examples: a) translating a letter brought home from school for your parents who don't know how to read well b) interpreting what your parents or family members say to an employee at the supermarket/grocery store, bank, at school, or at the post office c) writing letters or notes for someone who is unable to, or uncomfortable with, writing. This question is not related to professional interpreting for non-family members or for money or some other compensation. Napier, J. (2012). Sign language brokering: A survey of hearing and deaf Cotas [Survey]. Unpublished instrument.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

**59. Did you attend an interpreter training program (ITP, IEP, IPP) for any length of time? \***

Mark only one oval.

☐ No

☐ Yes Skip to question 62.

## Interpreter Training

**60. Whether you went to college (not an ITP) or not, what were the steps you took to learn how to be a professional interpreter? \***

Please be as detailed as possible

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**61. Did you major in a Deaf-related field that was not interpreting, if you went to college? \***

Deaf education, Deaf studies, etc.

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Did not attend college

Skip to question 88.

## Interpreter Training

62. Which interpreter training program did you attend? \*

This will be Program #1, if you attended more than one you will have an opportunity to list those.

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63. Did you complete program #1? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

64. How well did program #1 meet your needs as a deaf-parented student? \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Very well  
☐ Some aspects were good  
☐ Terribly

65. How many deaf-parented INSTRUCTORS were teaching in program #1 when you were there? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ None  
☐ 1  
☐ More than 1  
☐ I don't know

66. In what way did having or not having deaf-parented instructors impact your program #1 training experience? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ had no impact at all  
☐ continuing in the ITP  
☐ quitting the ITP  
☐ leaving the interpreting profession  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

67. How many deaf-parented CLASSMATES were in program #1 with you? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ 5 or more
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

68. In what way did having or not having deaf-parented classmates impact your interpreter training experience in program #1? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ had no impact at all
- ☐ continuing in the ITP
- ☐ quitting the ITP
- ☐ leaving the interpreting profession
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

69. Did you attend a 2nd interpreter training program as well? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No Skip to question 85.

## Interpreter Training #2

70. What was the 2nd interpreter training program you attended? \*

This will be Program #2

\_\_\_\_\_

71. Did you complete program #2? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

72. How well did program #2 meet your needs as a deaf-parented student? \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Some aspects were good
- ☐ Terribly

73. How many deaf-parented INSTRUCTORS were teaching in program #2 when you were there? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ More than 1
- ☐ I don't know

74. In what way did having or not having deaf-parented instructors impact your program #2 training experience? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ had no impact at all
- ☐ continuing in the ITP
- ☐ quitting the ITP
- ☐ leaving the interpreting profession
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

75. How many deaf-parented CLASSMATES were in program #2 with you? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ 5 or more
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

76. In what way did having or not having deaf-parented classmates impact your interpreter training experience in program #2? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ had no impact at all
- ☐ continuing in the ITP
- ☐ quitting the ITP
- ☐ leaving the interpreting profession
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

77. Did you attend a 3rd interpreter training program? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No Skip to question 85.

## Interpreter Training #3

78. What was the 3rd interpreter training program you attended? \*

This will be Program #3

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79. Did you complete program #3?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

80. How well did program #3 meet your needs as a deaf-parented student? \*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Some aspects were good
- ☐ Terribly

81. How many deaf-parented INSTRUCTORS were teaching in program #3 when you were there? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ More than 1
- ☐ I don't know

82. In what way did having or not having deaf-parented instructors impact your program #3 training experience? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ had no impact at all
- ☐ continuing in the ITP
- ☐ quitting the ITP
- ☐ leaving the interpreting profession
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



**83. How many deaf- parented CLASSMATES were in program #3 with you? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2-4
- ☐ 5 or more
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**84. In what way did having or not having deaf-parented classmates impact your interpreter training experience in program #3? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ had no impact at all
- ☐ continuing in the ITP
- ☐ quitting the ITP
- ☐ leaving the interpreting profession
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Interpreter Training****85. If you didn't complete any of these program(s),why didn't you?***Please be as detailed as you are comfortable being.*

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**86. Were you tested out of or exempt from a curricular or program requirement? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No *Skip to question 88.*

**Interpreter Training**

**87. Which requirements were you exempt from or tested out of? \***

Please list them here. If you don't remember, say so.

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**Interpreter Training****88. What courses/workshops/trainings were most helpful &/or beneficial on your path to professional interpreter and why? \***

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**89. What courses/workshops/trainings were least helpful &/or beneficial on your path to professional interpreter and why? \***

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**90. What characteristics do you find in the people who were most influential on your path to being a professional interpreter? \***

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91. What is one example of a positive experience you have had studying to become an interpreter? \*

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92. What is one example of a negative experience you have had studying to become an interpreter? \*

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93. What else would you like to say about your path to becoming a professional interpreter? \*

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94. Do you currently work as a professional interpreter? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No      *Skip to question 103.*

## Working as an Interpreter

**95. How many years have you been working as a professional interpreter? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-30 years
- ☐ 31-40 years
- ☐ more than 40 years

**96. How old were you when you first started working as a professional interpreter? \***

Not language brokering for family, and maybe not credentialed, but when you first were paid and viewed as a professional interpreter.

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**97. What interpreting credentials do you currently hold? \***

Check all that apply

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ None
- ☐ CSC
- ☐ CI
- ☐ CT
- ☐ NIC
- ☐ NIC:A
- ☐ NIC:M
- ☐ EIPA <4.0
- ☐ Ed:K-12 >4.0
- ☐ SC:L
- ☐ CDI
- ☐ RSC
- ☐ BEI Basic
- ☐ BEI Advanced
- ☐ BEI Master
- ☐ NAD III
- ☐ NAD IV
- ☐ NAD V
- ☐ COI
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**98. How long were you working as a professional interpreter before you received your first credential/certification? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ I have no credential *Skip to question 99.*
- ☐ 0 years *Skip to question 101.*
- ☐ 1-4 years *Skip to question 101.*
- ☐ 5-9 years *Skip to question 101.*
- ☐ 10-15 years *Skip to question 101.*
- ☐ 16-20 years *Skip to question 101.*
- ☐ > 21 years *Skip to question 101.*

*Skip to question 101.***Credential/Certification**

99. If you don't currently hold a credential/certification, why don't you? \*

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100. If you held a certification in the past but do not now, how old were you when you received your first interpreting credential/certification?

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## Work Environment

101. Do you hold a full or part time position as a staff interpreter (not faculty or instructor of interpreting)? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No Skip to question 112.

## Work Environment

102. In what type of setting is your staff interpreter position? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Medical
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ pre-K-12
- ☐ Post secondary
- ☐ Voc/tech education setting
- ☐ Commission or center on deafness
- ☐ VR
- ☐ Public interpreter referral agency
- ☐ Private interpreter referral agency
- ☐ Video relay service
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Skip to question 112.

## Work Environment

**103. How many years did you work as a professional interpreter? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than 5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-26 years
- ☐ more than 30 years

**104. How old were you when you first started working as a professional interpreter? \***

not language brokering for family, and maybe not credentialed, but when you first were paid and viewed as a professional interpreter.

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**105. What interpreting credentials do you now or have you held in the past? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ None
- ☐ CSC
- ☐ CI
- ☐ CT
- ☐ NIC
- ☐ NIC:A
- ☐ NIC:M
- ☐ EIPA <4.0
- ☐ Ed:K-12 >4.0
- ☐ SC:L
- ☐ CDI
- ☐ RSC
- ☐ BEI Basic
- ☐ BEI Advanced
- ☐ BEI Master
- ☐ NAD III
- ☐ NAD IV
- ☐ NAD V
- ☐ COI
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

106. How long were you working as a professional interpreter before you received your first credential/certification? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 0 years  
☐ 1-4 years  
☐ 5-9 years  
☐ 10-15 years  
☐ 16-20 years  
☐ < 21 years  
☐ I have no credential

107. If you don't currently hold a credential/certification, why don't you? \*

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108. How old were you when you received your first interpreting credential/certification? \*

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109. Why do you no longer work as a professional Signed Language/English interpreter? \*

Please list all reasons, be as detailed as you are comfortable with.

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110. Did you hold a full or part time position as a staff interpreter? \*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No      Skip to question 112.

## Work Environment



**111. In what type of setting was your staff interpreter position? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Medical
- ☐ Legal
- ☐ pre-K-12
- ☐ Post secondary
- ☐ Voc/tech education setting
- ☐ Commission or center on deafness
- ☐ VR
- ☐ Public interpreter referral agency
- ☐ Private interpreter referral agency
- ☐ Video relay service
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Deaf-Parented Training****112. What training topics would you like to see more of for deaf-parented interpreters? \***

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**113. Is there sufficient deaf-parented interpreter training in your area to help develop your professional skills and knowledge? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**114. Do you think that separate training courses for deaf-parented interpreters should be integrated into interpreter training?***Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

115. Do you think that deaf parented interpreters and deaf interpreters could or should be trained together? \*

Mark only one oval.

☐

Yes

☐

No Skip to question 117.

### Deaf-Parented Training

116. Why do you think that separate training courses for deaf-parented interpreters should be integrated into interpreter training? \*

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Skip to question 118.

### Deaf-Parented Training

117. Why don't you think that separate training courses for deaf-parented interpreters should be integrated into interpreter training? \*

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### Deaf- Parented Training

118. Do you think that deaf parented interpreters and deaf interpreters could or should be trained together? \*

Mark only one oval.

☐

Yes

☐

No Skip to question 120.

### Deaf-Parented Training

119. Why do you think that deaf-parented interpreters and deaf interpreters could or should be trained together?

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*Skip to question 121.*

## Deaf-Parented Training

120. Why don't you think that deaf-parented interpreters and deaf interpreters could or should be trained together?

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## Future Study Participation

121. If you are willing to be contacted to participate in a follow up focus group, please share your email address. If you agree to be contacted, you can change your mind later without any consequences. If you do agree, your participation will be confidential.  
Share your email address here, it will be kept confidential and separate from your responses in this survey.

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## APPENDIX B: Deaf-parented interpreter focus group questionnaire

5/22/2015

Deaf Parented Interpreter Focus Group Questionnaire

### Deaf Parented Interpreter Focus Group Questionnaire

Project background, Introduction to the study, & Consent

Thank you for volunteering to be a part of further study on the experiences of Deaf parented interpreters. Please complete this questionnaire. The questionnaire will be available for one week for you to complete.

This phase of the study will end on Sunday, September 7th at midnight EST.

About the Researcher

I am Amy Williamson, the daughter of deaf parents, Mary Ella Scarboro Williamson and Barney Williamson of North Carolina. I have worked as an ASL/English interpreter since 1990 and I am conducting this research as partial fulfillment for a Masters degree in Interpreting Studies at Western Oregon University under the supervision of Pamela Cancel.

Aims of this study

The target group of this study is deaf-parented interpreters (present or past) who identify as either Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, or Coda.

Who can participate

If you meet each of these criteria, please consider participating:

- You have one or more deaf parent and used signed language in the home while growing up
- You identify as Deaf, hard of hearing, hearing, &/or Coda
- You work as an ASL/English interpreter now OR have EVER worked as an ASL/English interpreter
- You are at least 18 years old

The aim of this study is

1. To collect demographic data on American Sign Language/English interpreters who have one or more deaf parent.
2. To capture the induction experiences of deaf-parented interpreters into the profession of signed language interpretation.
3. To capture what the early linguistic environments were for deaf-parented interpreters.
4. To make recommendations for the interpreter training and education of deaf-parented interpreters.

I hope you will participate in this questionnaire in order to contribute to our understanding of the training and educational experiences of deaf parented interpreters which may, in turn, improve the quality of interpreters working with our family members and the Deaf community as a whole.

Your responses to this survey will lead to the formation of focus groups. You may or may not be asked to be a part of a focus group; however you will be contacted either way.

Confidentiality

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence. All evidence of your involvement up until your withdrawal will not be analyzed.

Your responses will be confidential but not anonymous. Only the researcher will know who participated and all names and contact information will be held in confidence under password protection. After this initial contact your name and contact information will not be kept or maintained, it will be destroyed.

Sharing of study results & findings

No individual will be identified in any publication of the results, although some anonymised

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1enH6YCsBw-eEMtd8vIm\\_0WkrowPhadezRQlbBvc3jMI/printform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1enH6YCsBw-eEMtd8vIm_0WkrowPhadezRQlbBvc3jMI/printform)

1/5

**4. In which region of the country do you live? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ New England (CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT)
- ☐ Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, NJ, NY, PA, SC, VA, WV)
- ☐ Midwest (IA, IN, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, OH, SD, WI)
- ☐ South (AL, AR, KY, LA, MI, OK, TN, TX)
- ☐ West (AZ, CO, ID, NM, MT, UT, NV, WY)
- ☐ Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. How long have you identified as a professional interpreter? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Less than five years
- ☐ 6 – 10 years
- ☐ 11 – 15 years
- ☐ 16 – 20 years
- ☐ 21 – 25 years
- ☐ 26 – 30 years
- ☐ 30 years or more

**6. What is your age range? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 18-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-55
- ☐ 56-65
- ☐ over 66

**7. What is your gender identity? \****Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

quotes or transcribed examples of comments may be used when sharing the research findings from this study. Participation in this phase of the study is confidential.

Findings will be shared through workshops, presentations, and publications. The findings will be available to participants through a published Master's thesis or by contacting the researcher, Amy Williamson at [awilliamson13@wou.edu](mailto:awilliamson13@wou.edu), directly.

#### Time commitment

This questionnaire is estimated to take no more than 5 minutes.

#### Consent

Participation in this questionnaire will serve as your consent.

#### Questions or further information

If you have any questions concerning this research study, please contact Amy Williamson at [Awilliamson13@wou.edu](mailto:Awilliamson13@wou.edu) or Thesis Committee Chair, Pamela Cancel at [cancelp@wou.edu](mailto:cancelp@wou.edu).

The Western Oregon University Institutional Review Board has approved the ethical aspects of this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board at (503) 838-9200 or [irb@wou.edu](mailto:irb@wou.edu).

\* Required

#### 1. Do you have high speed internet access and a webcam? \*

To participate in the focus group, you need to have high speed internet and a webcam.  
Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No Stop filling out this form.

### Availability for Video Focus Group

#### 2. Can you be available for a video conference call on Sunday, September 28th from 3-5pm EST/2-4pmCST/1-3pmMST/12-2PST? \*

To participate in the focus group, you need to be available at this time.  
Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No Stop filling out this form.

### Availability for Video Focus Group

#### 3. Can you be available for a video conference call on Sunday, September 28th from 7-9pmEST/6-8pmCST/5-7pmMST/4-6pmPST? \*

To participate in the focus group, you need to be available at this time.  
Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No Stop filling out this form.

### Demographics

**8. What is your audiological status? \***

(Participants in this survey are deaf-parented. This question is not about identity. This question is about audiological status.)

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Deaf
- ☐ Hearing
- ☐ hard of hearing
- ☐ late deafened

**9. Did you attend an interpreter training program (ITP, IEP, IPP)? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**10. What interpreting credentials do you currently hold? \***

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ None
- ☐ CSC
- ☐ CI
- ☐ CT
- ☐ NIC
- ☐ NIC:A
- ☐ NIC:M
- ☐ EIPA <4.0
- ☐ Ed:K-12 >4.0
- ☐ SC:L
- ☐ CDI
- ☐ RSC
- ☐ BEI Basic
- ☐ BEI Advanced
- ☐ BEI Master
- ☐ NAD III
- ☐ NAD IV
- ☐ NAD V
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Please share your email address with me so that I can contact you for focus group participation. \***

